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DIMENSIONS OF WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE: A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION

Dimensions of Wilderness Experience: A Qualitative Investigation

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Introduction

The quality of visitors' experiences is important to wilderness managers. However, "quality" can have more than one meaning. Specifically, quality can refer to "goodness" (how enjoyable a trip is) or to the basic nature or distinctive character of the experience. In the first sense, quality is synonymous with "satisfying," while in the second sense, quality means the dimensions or aspects that make the experience unique from other types of experiences. Early wilderness studies emphasized quality in the first sense, consistently finding that visitors deem their wilderness trips to be highly satisfying despite considerable variation in circumstances encountered (Manning 1999). This led to reflection about the appropriateness of using satisfaction as the measure of experience quality. Some argued that – even if visitors report that their wilderness trips are highly satisfying – they many not have opportunities for the types of experiences prescribed in policy. In other words, high quality (satisfying) experiences may not equate to the qualities wilderness managers are mandated to provide, namely solitude, primitive recreation, and lack of confinement.

This realization has led to more recent studies that explore the "qualities" of the wilderness experience – in the second sense (Glaspell et al. 2003; Nickerson & Cook 2002). Our study is of this sort; we wanted to describe the qualities people ascribed to their wilderness experiences and factors that influence them. In particular, for reasons we explain later, we wanted to determine whether experiences differed among different destinations, whether day and overnight visitors described their experiences differently, and how use levels affect experiences.

Although much has been learned from past studies of wilderness experiences, a number of issues have arisen that prompted us to undertake a relatively novel approach to reach a more holistic understanding. One problem is that most (although not all) wilderness research has utilized quantitative approaches in which question topics and response categories are defined a priori. For example, people might be asked to rate the extent to which conditions such as crowding or campsite damage impacted their experience (Roggenbuck et al. 1993). This approach may miss important categories altogether and it certainly does not capture idiosyncratic or highly individualistic aspects of experience quality. It also makes it difficult to evaluate the relative importance of different conditions, because people usually rate each factor separately, requiring the analyst to infer how conditions interact to affect experiences. It is not possible to understand in any deep sense how people perceive or think about the conditions they encounter and the interactive effects of multiple influences on experience. We wanted to understand how people describe their wilderness experiences in total, in depth, and in their own words.

Another issue that has become apparent in research on experiences is that people rationalize and explain away their reactions to adverse conditions they encounter (Hall & Cole 2006). They sometimes exhibit complex logical inferences and sometimes simple heuristic reasoning. Any complex reasoning that underlies individual judgments about experience quality is largely not accessible with quantitative surveys. Yet, rationalizing, weighting different factors differently, or individualistic chains of reasoning might significantly affect the scores people provide on a survey, for example, when reporting about their experience of solitude. In particular, we have noted that people appear to judge crowding, solitude, and the feeling of wilderness in contrast to

other times, places, or experiences they have had in the past. We often hear people say that a place doesn't feel crowded (or does provide solitude) in comparison to another place they know or another trip they have taken. If these reactions are common, they may help explain the high scores on satisfaction that are typically obtained via visitor surveys. Therefore, in this study, we wanted to understand how people reason about any potentially suboptimal conditions they encounter and how those play into people's descriptions of their overall experience. Although our open-ended approach encompassed any suboptimal conditions, we focused in depth on social conditions.

Study Purpose

As described in the preface, our overall research project encompassed a varied set of qualitative and quantitative studies. To address our reservations about quantitative post-trip surveys, we conducted a qualitative study of people's on-site wilderness experiences, and that is the focus of this report. We developed interviews to assess experiences, where experiences were defined as the thoughts, emotions, and physical feelings that arise from visitors' activities and focus of attention. More formally, the experience is a function or outcome of influences (stimuli) from the social and physical environment, operating through individual perceptual, cognitive and affective processes. The experience happens as a continuous stream, and for our purposes is restricted to what exists in conscious awareness. We describe what people experience in wilderness and what factors they say shape those experiences. In addition, we examine the extent to which objective circumstances (namely destination, trip length, and use level) influence the experiences people report.

Experiences are defined as the thoughts, emotions, and physical feelings that arise from visitors' activities and focus of attention.

Approach and Rationale

As indicated above, we felt that a qualitative approach would be best suited to understand wilderness experiences. Moreover, we were concerned that a post-trip interview might be subject to certain types of recall bias or narrative reconstruction (Patterson et al. 1998), and we wanted to capture the complex, dynamic experience as it was occurring. Because of this, we believed it was best to collect data from people in wilderness during their experience. Therefore, we conducted semi-structured, tape-recorded interviews with people along trails and at destinations within wilderness.

Our interviews were originally intended to concentrate on what we called the "immediate conscious experience" (ICE) – the thoughts, feelings, and focus of attention of visitors in the moments before we approached them. We did this because we believed it would overcome some of the complications that arise from asking for global post-trip assessments (Borrie et al. 1998). It would reveal how frequently people were impacted by, for instance, other visitors. It would also reveal the variability in transient aspects of the experience, such as the specific focus of attention or thought at any given time. Focusing on the ICE was pioneered for wilderness studies by Borrie (Borrie & Roggenbuck 1998, 2001), Hull (Hull et al. 1992, 1996; Hull & Stewart 1995), and McIntyre and Roggenbuck (1998). These authors used repeated measures in a quantitative design to understand how emotions, focus of attention, and thoughts varied. We

combined their use of real-time assessment with Patterson et al.'s (1998) use of qualitative interviews that were geared at understanding the nature of wilderness experiences. Specifically, we conducted individual interviews (following Patterson et al.) but oriented these largely around point-in-time assessments like Borrie, Hull, and McIntyre and Roggenbuck.

Given our focus on the ICE, many questions directed visitors to describe what was going on just before we approached. However, we soon realized that people had difficulty answering these types of questions and wanted to talk about much more than the most recent hour of their trip (cf. Patterson et al. 1998). This generated much information that was not germane to our narrow goal of understanding the ICE but that was rich for informing managers about wilderness experiences. Additionally, our interviews included other policy-relevant questions that went beyond the ICE, such as personal understanding of concepts like solitude or primitive recreation. For these reasons, interview texts are most usefully divided into (1) material that describes the ICE; (2) discussions about other events or times during the trip, or the trip as a whole; and (3) visitors' comments, opinions, and experiences that are not tied to the present trip at all. We dealt with this by generating different reports. One (Johnson et al. 2005) addressed visitors' definitions of key qualities – naturalness, remoteness, primitiveness, and wilderness – as well as the factors that affect whether people feel they experience these qualities. A second report (Johnson in preparation) is restricted to an analysis of the ICE. It permits a glimpse into the frequency and intensity of thoughts, feelings, and focus of attention during a narrow slice of time. The present report describes what visitors said about their wilderness trip as a whole – what they felt were important aspects of their experiences, their thoughts and feelings, their motivations, and the key influences on experience quality. This includes, but also goes beyond, information pertaining to the ICE.

The present report describes what visitors said about their wilderness trip as a whole – what they felt were important aspects of their experiences, their thoughts and feelings, their motivations, and the key influences on experience quality.

Organization of the Report

The sections that follow describe the methods we used to generate data about trip experiences, including the rationale for site selection and the nature of the questions we posed. The Results section begins with a description of the respondents. Major sub-sections compare visitors to the three study sites on motives, thoughts/attention, and feelings. We go to on to describe the factors wilderness visitors said were key influences on the quality of their experience, with particular attention to how the presence of or interactions with other people – both in their own group and in other groups – affected them. For each of these topics, tables present the frequency of main themes for the sample as a whole as well as each of the three research sites. Notable differences between day and overnight users and among people interviewed on days with different use level are also described. We contrast the three sites because they provided very different environments (see below), which helps reveal ways that setting factors influence experience quality. We contrast day and overnight users because trip length has been of considerable interest in the context of understanding wilderness experiences (Cole 2001). We contrast responses obtained on days that differed in levels of use to determine whether any notable patterns emerged, for instance, if people were more affected by the social setting on busy days (Stewart & Cole 2001).

A final section of results describes visitors' self-reports about the effect of being in our study. We asked specifically about this because we were concerned that interrupting visitors during their wilderness experience could be considered highly intrusive, and future research would gain from knowing whether this was the case. The report concludes with a discussion of the implications of our study for wilderness management, particularly of high use destinations.

Methods

Data Collection

Study Areas

Qualitative research seeks depth of understanding and sacrifices statistical generalizability for the ability to interact more closely with selected individuals (Creswell 2003). Nevertheless, the transferability of the findings is greatly enhanced if similar results are obtained from different types of individuals. If, on the other hand, differences emerge, one can inspect such differences for clues about causal factors. Therefore, we selected three study locations that we thought would maximize the variability of the visitor experience along certain dimensions. Although all three locations have high levels of use, they differed in the distance from the trailhead to the destination, the type of vegetation and topography, and the dominant visitor activities. We reasoned that the notable differences in environmental features might be reflected in people's focus of attention and perhaps emotion. Similarly, because people pursue different activities at these sites and getting to them demands different levels of physical effort, we might observe differences in motivations, emotions, thoughts, and feelings (Bodin & Hartig 2003; Korpela et al. 2002).

Marion Lake, in Mount Jefferson, is a short (2-mile) walk from the trailhead and offers excellent fishing at a very large (>300 acres) natural lake. Being a relatively low elevation site on the west slopes of the Cascade Mountains, it is densely forested with old growth cedar, western hemlock, Douglas-fir, and true fir. Many visitors to Marion Lake – especially early in the season – are long-time visitors. We studied Marion Lake in late spring/early summer (May 25 to June 13, 2002) as the snow was melting out, with our study period encompassing the Memorial Day holiday. The weather was quite varied, with several days of cold rain.

Our second location, Pete Lake, is in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, on the east slopes of the Cascades. This makes it a drier and somewhat more open environment than Marion Lake. The 100-acre lake lies four miles from the nearest trailhead, up a fairly easy trail. However, at the beginning of our study period (July 1 to July 17), the trail had not been logged out and one stream created a substantial fording challenge to some visitors. While the weather was generally pleasant at Pete Lake, the mosquitoes were notable. Pete Lake is a popular day use destination, but unlike Marion Lake attracts relatively little angling. The area is largely forested, with small meadow openings and glimpses of the surrounding rugged alpine peaks.

Our final study location was the Lakes Basin Management Area and its access trails in the Eagle Cap Wilderness in northeast Oregon. The Lakes Basin lies 7 to 8 miles from the nearest trailheads, and is comprised of several montane and subalpine lakes. The open, granitic terrain

provides spectacular vistas and colorful displays of wildflowers in its many meadows. We studied visitors to the Lakes Basin in late summer (August 1 to September 3), and the weather was very pleasant during that time. Most Lakes Basin visitors are on extended overnight trips, and some people use outfitters to bring their gear to their camp (drop camps). Thus, the type of experience could potentially differ substantially from the other two study locations.

Sampling

In each location, our goal was to seek theoretical saturation – the point at which no new information was being provided by respondents (Taber 2000; Tuckett 2005). When use was low, we approached all groups present and invited their participation. When use was higher, we selected respondents to maximize diversity in features such as trip length (day vs. overnight), group size, gender, and other observable group characteristics. Often, due to low use, we surveyed everyone we encountered as we traveled through the area, and in that respect our sample approximates a random sample. One challenging issue in the Eagle Cap Wilderness was obtaining an adequately large number of day users; few day users reach the Lakes Basin where we were camped. Therefore, we intentionally spent several days positioned along the access trails at places where we could intercept day users, and on those days we focused primarily on day users.

Our selection of interview respondents from within groups varied depending on the size of the group and whether one or both researchers were present. If a researcher was working alone, he or she selected one individual from the group for the interview and asked the other group members to complete a written questionnaire about the ICE based primarily on Borrie's work (see Johnson in preparation for questionnaire results). Solitary visitors were almost always interviewed. If the researchers were together, each would select an individual for the interview, and the other group members would be given the written questionnaire. This report presents only the qualitative interview findings.

Questioning

Nearly all interview participants were asked a set of questions about specific topics, although the precise wording differed from interview to interview. In addition, following qualitative research convention, we experimented with other questions, and in so doing, some were asked more often at one site or another. Other individualized probes were utilized as seemed appropriate for each interview. The common questions – which were asked in slightly different ways and in different orders, depending on the flow of the interview – were the following:

- What were your main reasons or motivations for visiting?
- What were you thinking about?
- What were you focusing on or paying attention to?
- What type of mood have you been in? How would you describe your feelings?
- How are you feeling physically?
- What factors have been key to your experience? (This question was often probed to identify positive and negative factors.)
- Thinking about the people in your group, how are they affecting your experience?
- How have people outside your group affected your experience?
- Have you experienced solitude? Crowding?

- Have you experienced any times on this trip that you lost track of time or you just got lost in the moment?
- How has being in this study affected your experience?

We varied in how consistently and persistently we asked people to elaborate upon their responses to each of these common questions. If people seemed comfortable and gregarious, we asked them to tell us more about what they meant. If they seemed uncomfortable or in a hurry, we curtailed the prompts. This naturally led to variation in the depth of discussion in each interview. The variability in both questions asked and depth of probing means that the quantitative presentation of results in this report should be viewed as illustrating general tendencies. It is probably inappropriate to place too much weight on precise numbers in the tables we present. Small differences are probably not important. However, large differences may indicate important patterns.

The variability in questioning and depth of probing means that the quantitative presentation of results in this report should be viewed as illustrating general tendencies. It is probably inappropriate to place too much weight on specific numbers in the tables we present.

Generally, questions began with open-ended, non-directive prompts, such as "what were you thinking about?" However, people often did not fully describe their thoughts and focus without further prompting. For example, they might say[1], *Oh, I don't know. I'm just thinking about fishing, I guess*. At Pete Lake, one person said, *I don't know. I just like to walk with a clear mind and not think about too many things.* An Eagle Cap visitor mentioned *just looking around and thinking, wow. It's such an amazing place. It puts me in a good mood just to be here.* While the third excerpt provides an indication of positive emotion, none of the examples goes into much depth. Therefore, we followed the general question with specific probes, which tended to vary and evolve as the season progressed. For example, we added the probe, "how much were you thinking about the environment?" after the initial round of interviews at Marion Lake showed that people were not telling us very much about such thoughts. In Alpine Lakes we experimented with asking people to rate the extent of thinking devoted to different issues (home, family, environment) on a 10-point scale, but we did not do this at either of the other two sites. The main differences across locations were the following (see also Table 1):

- "How have you been feeling physically" was asked nearly always at Mt. Jefferson, often at Alpine Lakes, and rarely at Eagle Cap.
- Almost everyone was asked about key influences on experience quality, but the way the question was asked (eliciting positive and negative factors explicitly, versus a non-specific general question) varied across sites.
- Most visitors in Mt. Jefferson and Alpine Lakes were asked how their own group affected their trip, but fewer than half of Eagle Cap visitors were asked this. Similarly, fewer Eagle Cap visitors were asked about the impact of their own group on their experience.

[1] Italics indicate direct quotes from interviews.

Table 1. Questions Asked of Wilderness Visitors in Different Study Locations

	Mt. Jefferson (n=64)	Alpine Lakes (n=57)	Eagle Cap (n=62)
Question asked about:	----------Percent----------		
Motives, reasons for visiting	89	93	77
Thoughts	84	100	90
Focus of attention	89	95	84
Mood/feelings	89	96	90
Timelessness	80	90	60
Somatic/bodily feelings	84	67	24
Impact of own group on experience	73	84	48
Impact of other people	84	96	85
Solitude	86	86	76
Crowding	83	86	92
Key influences on experience (any)	100	100	87
Specifically negative	38	53	31
Specifically positive	95	55	57
Not specific, or both negative & positive	58	38	28
Being in study	56	74	60

Eliciting people's thoughts and feelings proved to be more challenging than getting them to respond to other questions. We tried several strategies to draw people out, including asking people to indicate what they would be writing about in a journal (mostly asked at Alpine Lakes), having people rate topics of thought on a 10-point scale (primarily Alpine Lakes), or asking people to speculate about what someone else might be thinking or feeling if they were present (a projective technique). If responses to these questions indicated something about the person's actual thoughts during the trip, we included them in our analysis. If they drew them off topic, we do not include the responses here.

Data Analysis

Coding Interviews

To develop codes for the interviews, two of the principal researchers read and re-read many of the interviews and independently generated lists of themes. Through a process of consultation, these were distilled down to a set of top-level tree nodes. The nodes were developed both inductively, through exploration of common themes emerging from the data, as well as deductively, based on prior research about wilderness experiences. Often the two directions converged, as occurred with nodes for emotions and somatic feelings. However, sometimes nodes emerged that were not explicitly highlighted in prior literature, such as the importance of senses (especially smells and sounds) or the significance of contemplating God.

Through several rounds of independent coding, inter-rater reliability was established. The unit of analysis was the "paragraph," i.e., any individual's statement in response to a question. Each part of a response that was broken up by a new query or probe from the interviewer became a unique text unit. This approach to coding enhanced reliability, but it caused some unforeseen issues for analysis, as will be explained below. We examined inter-rater reliability at each level within the hierarchy of nodes using a random sample of interviews. At the top level, our reliability was

quite high. At the lowest levels (with more than 200 assignable codes), our reliability was somewhat lower, but overall, it was still within acceptable ranges (more than 80%).

Some of the top tree nodes corresponded to the topic of the questions we asked. For instance, a top tree node was "affect," under which we coded responses to questions about moods or feelings. However, other top tree nodes reflected prevalent themes that either cut across different questions (such as personal factors or the natural environment) or that emerged during analysis (such as comparisons of the trip with other trips or places). The top tree nodes of interest in this report are:

- Affect (emotion/mood)
- Personal factors (self and personal goals)
- Activities
- Natural environment (features people described and evaluative comments)
- Ecological impacts (including vegetation, horse impacts, and litter)
- Wildlife
- Somatic (physical) feelings
- Timelessness/flow
- A person's own group (including as a motivation for the trip and the influence of being with family or friends)
- Impacts of and reaction to other groups (including solitude, crowding, number of encounters, and positive or negative reactions)
- Comparisons of current trip or location to other places or times

Whenever a person mentioned something that fell in one of these categories, we coded it as such, regardless of whether it was mentioned in response to a particular question or was spontaneously offered at another point in the interview. While this approach most accurately and completely captures the themes that emerged, it makes it difficult to compare interviews in which different sets of questions were asked. A good example is safety. At Marion Lake, when snow made travel somewhat treacherous, we often asked explicitly about whether people were thinking about their safety. This question was generally not asked at the other two locations later in the summer. Hence, the prevalence of "safety" as a topic at Marion Lake was in part a function of the actual conditions, because some people volunteered comments on safety, but it was also due to the focus of our questions.

Because theme frequency was partly a function of the questions we asked, we reviewed all transcripts and coded text for the specific questions listed in Table 1. This permitted us to represent the frequency of themes as a percentage of people who were asked about a specific topic. Our two-layered approach to coding led to each segment of text being coded for main topic(s) (e.g., wildlife and positive emotion) as well as the question under which it occurred (e.g., focus of attention).

Analysis and Reporting

Many decisions and assumptions were required in analyzing the data and developing this report. With more than 2,500 pages of transcripts, we relied heavily on the ability of QSR N6 to generate "intersections," where material sharing different codes is reported in a matrix form. For

instance, we could restrict our search to text that was elicited by a specific question, such as motives for the trip. To see how specific motives varied by location, we would then run an intersection on this restricted text between the node for wilderness and any other node of interest (e.g., "activity" or "scenery"). This would generate an interactive matrix (Figure 1), called a "node search" in N6. Each cell contains the text represented by the intersection, restricted to passages that were, in this case, responses to the question about motives. We then inspected these passages to ensure that appropriate inferences were being drawn.

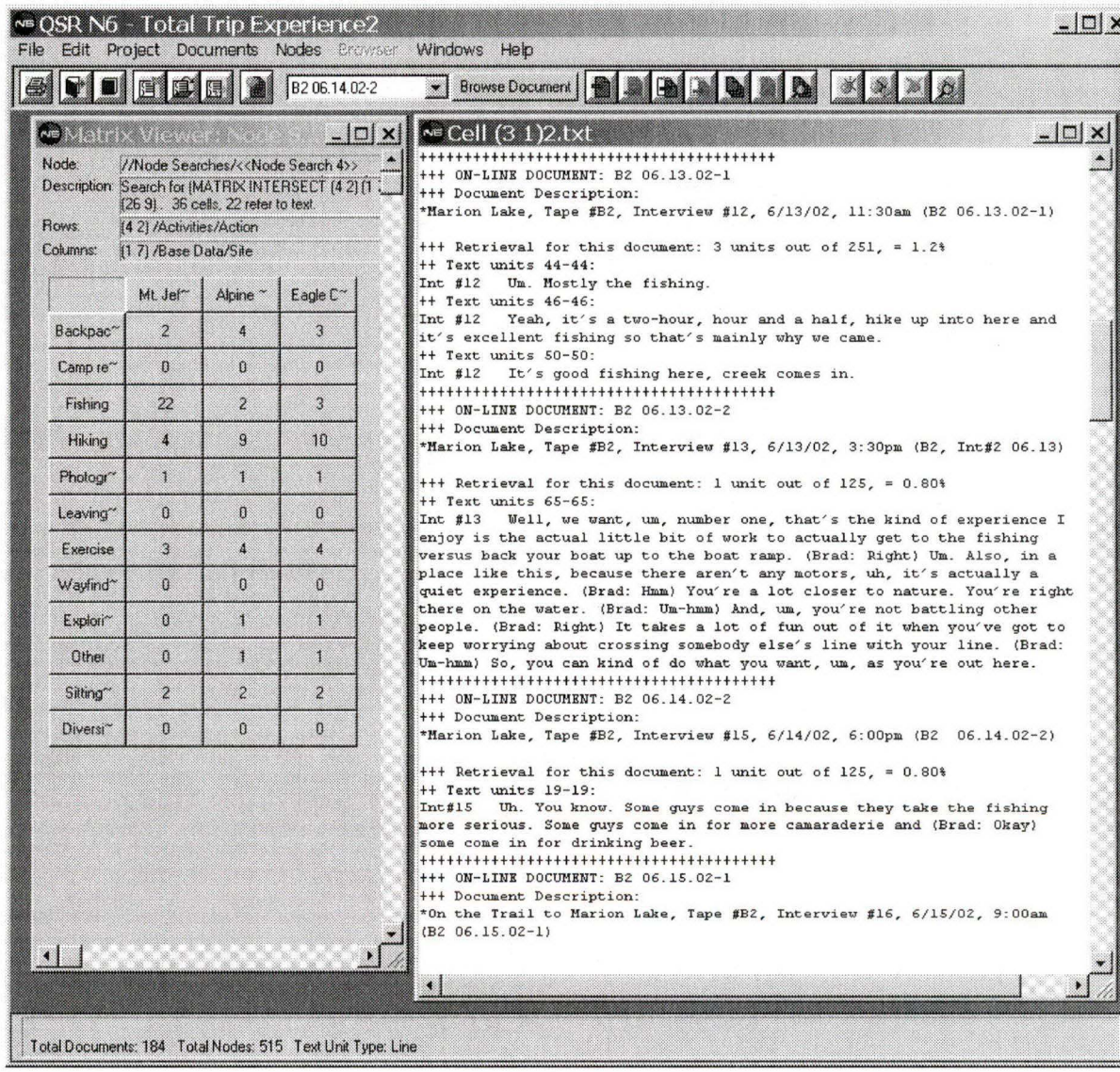
QSR N6 - Total Trip Experience2
File Edit Project Documents Nodes Browser Windows Help
B2 06.14.02-2
Browse Document
Matrix Viewer: Node Search
Node: //Node Searches/<<Node Search 4>>
Description: Search for (MATRIX INTERSECT (4 2) (1 7) (26 9)... 36 cells, 22 refer to text
Rows: (4 2) /Activities/Action
Columns: (1 7) /Base Data/Site
Mt. Jef~ | Alpine ~ | Eagle C~
Backpac~ 2 4 3
Camp re~ 0 0 0
Fishing 22 2 3
Hiking 4 9 10
Photogr~ 1 1 1
Leaving~ 0 0 0
Exercise 3 4 4
Wayfind~ 0 0 0
Explori~ 0 1 1
Other 0 1 1
Sitting~ 2 2 2
Diversi~ 0 0 0
Cell (3 1)2.txt
+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: B2 06.13.02-1
+++ Document Description:
*Marion Lake, Tape #B2, Interview #12, 6/13/02, 11:30am (B2 06.13.02-1)
+++ Retrieval for this document: 3 units out of 251, = 1.2%
++ Text units 44-44:
Int #12 Um. Mostly the fishing.
++ Text units 46-46:
Int #12 Yeah, it's a two-hour, hour and a half, hike up into here and it's excellent fishing so that's mainly why we came.
++ Text units 50-50:
Int #12 It's good fishing here, creek comes in.
+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: B2 06.13.02-2
+++ Document Description:
*Marion Lake, Tape #B2, Interview #13, 6/13/02, 3:30pm (B2, Int#2 06.13)
+++ Retrieval for this document: 1 unit out of 125, = 0.80%
++ Text units 65-65:
Int #13 Well, we want, um, number one, that's the kind of experience I enjoy is the actual little bit of work to actually get to the fishing versus back your boat up to the boat ramp. (Brad: Right) Um. Also, in a place like this, because there aren't any motors, uh, it's actually a quiet experience. (Brad: Hmm) You're a lot closer to nature. You're right there on the water. (Brad: Um-hmm) And, um, you're not battling other people. (Brad: Right) It takes a lot of fun out of it when you've got to keep worrying about crossing somebody else's line with your line. (Brad: Um-hmm) So, you can kind of do what you want, um, as you're out here.
+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: B2 06.14.02-2
+++ Document Description:
*Marion Lake, Tape #B2, Interview #15, 6/14/02, 6:00pm (B2 06.14.02-2)
+++ Retrieval for this document: 1 unit out of 125, = 0.80%
++ Text units 19-19:
Int#15 Uh. You know. Some guys come in because they take the fishing more serious. Some guys come in for more camaraderie and (Brad: Okay) some come in for drinking beer.
+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: B2 06.15.02-1
+++ Document Description:
*On the Trail to Marion Lake, Tape #B2, Interview #16, 6/15/02, 9:00am (B2 06.15.02-1)
Total Documents: 184 Total Nodes: 515 Text Unit Type: Line

Figure 1. Example of N6 Output: Intersection Node Search for Activity by Wilderness, Restricted to Text about Motives

One issue for analysis concerns whether people's responses to focused probes reflect what they were actually thinking, or whether they were generated by our asking questions. We assumed that people's responses reflected their independent thoughts, because we had no other practical,

reliable alternative. In cases where people describe specific details, we are more confident that the responses are genuine. In the first two examples below[2], where the question asked about people's thoughts, it is not clear whether people were simply giving an answer that they thought we expected; the third provides more detail; and the fourth and fifth seem to be genuine responses. We took all statements at face value, but the wide differences in the extent of elaboration should be borne in mind when examining our results.

I: How about the environment? Natural world around us?
R: Oh yeah, I think about that a lot. Yeah. [ALW, Day, Low, M]

I: How about the environment?
R: Yea, it's everything out here. You're fully focused on it. [ALW, Day, Low, F]

I: How about the natural environment around you...how much were you thinking about that?
R: That's really primarily what I was thinking about. And just looking at the flora and fauna and the views and the peaks. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]

I: Have you thought much about the environment or the natural area around you?
R: Yeah. The beauty and I've noticed maybe the lake is dirtier this morning than it was yesterday for some reason. I don't know why. But it just seems dirtier. [ALW, Ov, Mod, F]

I: Okay. Anything you want to talk about... things that you actually were thinking about?
R: I think with the environment, one of our concerns was we were camping in the trees last night and we decided to camp out here on the rocks and... I was trying to figure out if we were going to be in the way of wildlife coming down to the river at all. And that kind of bothered me a little bit that we were actually going to be camping right on the river. But then, as I looked around, I noticed there were other access points to the water, so I didn't really say anything. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]

In sum, our results present frequencies (as percentages) for all respondents who were asked about a topic, as well as the percentage by site. The numbers in tables give a sense of how prevalent different themes were, although it should be remembered that, because the depth of questioning and response varied, the numbers are rough estimates. When comparing the frequency of themes across sites, trip lengths, or use levels, we considered a difference of 10-20 percentage points to be "moderate" (groups are described as "somewhat different") and a difference larger than 20 percentage points to be "substantial." We do not discuss differences less than 10%.

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[2] In excerpts where both the interviewer's and respondent's words are included, "I" denotes the interviewer and "R" denotes the respondent. Bracketed text indicates the site, trip length ("Day"=day; "Ov"=overnight), use level ("Low"=low use; "Mod"=moderate use; "Hi"=high use), and gender ("M"= male; "F"=female). Where an attribute was not recorded, this is indicated by "?"

Results

Participant Characteristics

This report is based on 183 interviews, divided among the three sites (Table 2). The overall response rate was 86%, varying from 81% at Eagle Cap to 91% at Mt. Jefferson. While the number of interviews at each site was approximately equal, their distributions across use levels within each site, as well as the proportion of day and overnight respondents within each site, varied considerably.

Table 2. Number of Interviews by Wilderness, Use Level, and Trip Length

	Wilderness & Trip Length						
	Mt. Jefferson		Alpine Lakes		Eagle Cap		TOTAL
Use level	Day	Over	Day	Over	Day	Over	
Low	3	7	11	8	0	10	39
Moderate	1	5	15	9	8	12	50
High	21	25	8	5	8	19	86
Total	25	37	34	22	16	41	175

Note: 8 interviews were missing either trip length or use level information.

We categorized use level based on tallies that interviewers kept each day of the total number of people they observed. At Marion Lake (Mt. Jefferson), the number of people encountered on any given day ranged from a low of 4 to a high of 114. At Pete Lake (Alpine Lakes), the range was 3 to 70, and in the Lakes Basin (Eagle Cap), the range was 7 to 81. Use levels below 20 people per day were classified as "low" use; between 21 and 40 people was considered "moderate" use; and days with more than 40 people were classified as "high use." Although these divisions are arbitrary, they permit us to determine – in a broad way – whether people's experiences were influenced by the number of other people present. In Mt. Jefferson, sampling on the holiday weekend (Memorial Day) meant that many people were interviewed on those busy days, but weekdays (especially rainy ones) had very little visitation due to the early time of the season. Hence that sample was biased toward high use times. By later in the summer, at the other two sites, use was somewhat higher on weekdays, permitting us to find and interview people who visited on the lower-use days of the week as well as the high-use weekends and holidays. Nevertheless, nearly half of all interviews took place on "high use" days.

The distribution of interviews across length of stay also varied with site. Eagle Cap respondents tended to be on overnight trips. The same was true at Mt. Jefferson, although the tendency was less pronounced, while Alpine Lakes respondents were more likely to be day users. Overall, Alpine Lakes had the most even distribution of visitors across trip lengths and use levels. Individual cell sizes tend to be too small to thoroughly analyze each combination of trip length, site, and use level, so in our presentations we discuss differences across groups within one dimension at a time. Therefore, readers should be careful to note that, when we talk about high

use days, nearly half of respondents were from Mt. Jefferson; when we talk about day users, Alpine Lakes visitors are over-represented and Eagle Cap visitors are under-represented. For low use days – which generated the fewest interviews – Alpine Lakes visitors make up nearly half of the sample.

When we talk about high use days, nearly half of respondents were from Mt. Jefferson; when we talk about day users, Alpine Lakes visitors are over-represented and Eagle Cap visitors are under-represented; and Alpine Lakes visitors made up nearly half of the respondents on low-use days.

Respondents' trip lengths varied considerably across the three study locations (Table 3). While most Alpine Lakes visitors were on day trips, the largest number of Eagle Cap visitors was on long (more than 5 day) trips, and Mt. Jefferson trips were intermediate. Unfortunately, we had very few interviews from late in overnight visitors' trips – just over half were interviewed on the first day of their trip and only 4% were interviewed after having been in the wilderness three or more days. Hence, our ability to discuss the nature of the experience on extended trips is limited.

Table 3. Respondents' Trip Lengths and Day of Trip When Interview Occurred

	MJW		ALW		ECW		All Sites	
Trip length	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 day	27	43.5	34	63.0	17	29.8	78	45.1
2 days	18	29.0	12	22.2	1	1.8	31	17.9
3 days	12	19.4	6	11.1	1	1.8	19	11.0
4 days	3	4.8	1	1.9	11	19.3	15	8.7
5+ days	2	3.2	1	1.9	27	47.4	30	17.3
Total	62	100.0	54	100.0	57	100.0	173	100.0
Day of trip	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Day 1	34	54.8	43	79.6	18	31.6	95	54.9
Day 2	25	40.3	10	18.5	17	29.8	52	30.1
Day 3	2	3.2	0	0.0	17	29.8	19	11.0
Day 4	0	0.0	1	1.9	4	7.0	5	2.9
Day 5+	1	1.6	0	0.0	1	1.8	2	1.2
Total	62	100.0	54	100.0	57	100.0	173	100.0

Few study participants were traveling alone (Table 4). The largest number of people was traveling in groups of two people, although the median group size was 3 to 4 people among Eagle Cap visitors. Several Eagle Cap visitors were in relatively large groups. While gender representation was nearly equal for the Alpine Lakes and Eagle Cap samples, most Mt. Jefferson respondents were men (Table 5). Although we tracked information on children for many groups, for about half we did not. Therefore we cannot analyze differences in the experiences of groups traveling with and without children.

Table 4. Group Size Distribution

	MJW		ALW		ECW		Total
Group size	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
1 – Solo	2	3.1	5	8.8	5	8.1	6.6
2	33	51.6	26	45.6	22	35.5	44.3
3 to 4	16	25.0	21	36.8	11	17.7	26.2
5 to 7	12	18.8	3	5.3	10	16.1	13.7
8+	1	1.6	2	3.5	14	22.6	9.3
Total	64	100.0	57	100.0	62	100.0	100.0

Table 5. Representation of Men and Women in the Study

	MJW		ALW		ECW		Total
Gender	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
Male	45	71.4	33	58.9	35	57.3	62.8
Female	18	28.6	23	41.1	26	42.6	37.2
Total	63	100.0	56	100.0	61	100.0	100.0

Note: Gender was not recorded for three respondents.

Most visitors mentioned participation in some activity during their interview, despite the fact that we asked no specific question about activities (Table 6). At Marion Lake (Mt. Jefferson), the most common activity by far was fishing, an activity that was substantially less common at the other two sites. Many people in all three locations mentioned hiking, often because the interview occurred as we intercepted people who were hiking along a trail and there were few stock users in the sample. Another very common activity was sitting, relaxing, and passively enjoying the environment. Many people were interviewed at camps or destinations, which could account for this finding.

Table 6. Activities Mentioned at Any Time during Interviews

	MJW		ALW		ECW		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	%
Any activity	60	93.8	53	93.0	56	85.5	92.3
Hiking	34	56.7	37	69.8	33	58.9	61.5
Fishing	41	68.3	8	15.1	15	26.8	37.9
Sitting, relaxing	20	33.3	23	43.4	21	37.5	37.9
Exercise	11	18.3	13	24.5	6	10.7	17.8
Photography	5	8.3	9	17.0	11	19.6	14.8
Wayfinding	4	6.7	5	9.4	3	5.4	7.1
Horseback riding	0	0.0	5	9.5	3	5.4	4.7
Exploring	2	3.3	1	1.9	3	5.4	3.6

Trip Motives

Most visitors were asked about their motivations for taking their wilderness trip (Table 7). Usually, the question asked, "what was your most important reason for coming here?" However, there was considerable variability in the question wording, as it was often inserted in the conversation in response to something the respondent said. Other versions included "what were you hoping for?" and "what makes you want to come here rather than somewhere else?"

We classified motives into categories, and those mentioned by at least 10% of respondents are shown in Table 7. Across all sites, the most common motive was to pursue an activity. However, specific aspects of the natural environment were especially important for Eagle Cap visitors and much less so for visitors at the other two sites. Being with one's group, either family or friends, ranked third, with approximately one quarter to one third of respondents citing this as a motive. Psychological motives, such as getting away or escaping daily routines and experiencing mental rejuvenation, were motivators for less than 20% of all respondents. Finally, a relatively small percentage of visitors specifically mentioned going to a place because it was convenient and near home. Each of these major categories of motives is discussed below.

Table 7. Primary Categories of Motives

	MJW	ALW	ECW	All Sites
Number asked about motives	57	43	48	148
% asked about motives	89.1	75.4	77.4	80.9
	-------Percent of People Who Were Asked about Motives-------			
Activity	49.1	44.2	39.6	44.6
Natural environment	29.8	37.2	50.0	38.5
Family, friends, own group	24.6	34.9	37.5	31.8
Escape from civilization	29.8	16.3	8.3	18.9
Mental refreshment	14.0	23.3	6.3	14.2
Access/distance	10.5	25.6	8.3	14.2

The prevalence of specific **activities** as motives differed substantially across the three wildernesses, with fishing being most prominent for Mt. Jefferson visitors and hiking being more important for Alpine Lakes and Eagle Cap visitors (Table 8). These tendencies no doubt reflect the opportunities available at each site. For instance, at the time we were sampling at Marion Lake, snow prevented people from hiking more than a few miles round trip, whereas the fishing at Marion Lake is well-known as excellent early in the year.

Not surprisingly, the type of activities people were seeking did not differ across high, moderate, or low use days. However, we might have expected that activities would differ for day and overnight visitors, but this did not appear to be the case.

Table 8. Motives Related to Activities

	MJW (n=57)	ALW (n=43)	ECW (n=48)	All Sites (n=148)
	----------Percent of People Who Were Asked about Motives----------			
Any activity	49.1	44.2	39.6	44.6
Fishing	38.6	4.7	6.3	18.2
Hiking	7.9	20.9	20.8	15.5
Exercise	5.3	9.3	8.3	7.4
Backpacking	3.4	9.3	6.3	6.1
Sitting, relaxing	3.5	4.7	4.2	4.1

Sometimes, activities were described simply as activities, without reference to a particular type of "experience" as commonly envisioned in planning frameworks like ROS. For instance, one Mt. Jefferson visitor described his goals as to *fish and drink beer - that's about it*, while another said he came because *Marion is one of the first lakes that has a relatively low elevation with really good fishing that you can get to*. When asked, "What would be your single most important reason for coming here today?" one Alpine Lakes visitor said, *we wanted to hike, we love to hike.* However, several people explicitly mentioned or implied that the type of experience associated with an activity in wilderness differed from what is available in other environments:

> *The kind of experience I enjoy is the actual little bit of work to actually get to the fishing versus back your boat up to the boat ramp. Also, in a place like this, because there aren't any motors, it's actually a quiet experience. You're a lot closer to nature. You're right there on the water. And you're not battling other people. It takes a lot of fun out of it when you've got to keep worrying about crossing somebody else's line with your line. [MJW, Day, Low, M]*

> *There's some really nice trout in this lake. Not planters, you know? These fish that you catch, they're red-meated, they're just awesome... I probably catch as many trout in Detroit Lake [a developed reservoir] down there with the crowds as I could here, but this, to me, is a more romantic, maybe, experience because they are more wild, they feed on natural feed and they're not harassed by a bunch of fishermen all the time. And basically this is a pure trout fishing experience in my opinion. [MJW, Day, Low, M]*

> *You're hiking along going from lake to lake, going over passes, you almost feel like an explorer like in the past – of course you have trails but it's primitive for modern day. You're kind of like a pioneer in a way. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

Additionally, people rarely mentioned an activity as a motive without also describing other motives, such as escape from routine or work pressures or the opportunity to spend time with family or friends. For instance, one Mt. Jefferson angler resisted our attempt to get him to identify a single most important motive: *There is no single reason. I mean, it's fishing, friendship, and getting away*. An Alpine Lakes visitor described wanting *just to get away from everything,* along with *the exercise* and a chance to *sit and read, watch the river,* and *just relax.* An Eagle Cap visitor responded this way:

The single most important reason, that's a tough one. The main reason I guess is because I'm a photographer and I'm always out looking for the ultimate photograph in different places. Then there's the exercise, there's the contemplating life situation right now. Getting out of the heat. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

Many people were seeking scenic settings or specific aspects of the **natural environment**. (Table 9). Mountains and water featured prominently, although mountains were substantially more of an attractant in the Eagle Cap than either of the two forested settings. However, the importance of mountains was similar for day (9%) and overnight (12%) visitors, and it did not differ by use level. Water appeared to be more of a draw for people on day trips (19%) than overnight (8%) and people visiting on low use days (20%), for unknown reasons.

Table 9. Motives Related to the Natural Environment

	MJW (n=57)	ALW (n=43)	ECW (n=48)	All Sites (n=148)
	----------Percent of People Asked about Motives----------			
Any natural environment	29.8	37.2	50.0	38.5
Scenery, views (general)	14.0	18.6	31.3	20.9
Water (lakes or rivers)	10.5	16.3	16.7	14.2
Mountains	1.8	4.7	29.2	11.5
Forest	1.8	4.7	8.3	4.7

Some statements about motives related to nature were quite general:

- *I like being around the water*
- *to check out a new lake*
- *this is the best place that couples the fishing with nature*
- *it's a nice lake*
- *a nice hike and a lake*
- *to see a really beautiful spot – you know, just see something really fantastic.*

In general, the references to natural environment that emerged when people were questioned about their motives were much less specific than the features people described when we questioned them about the factors that were key to their experiences or about their focus of attention, as will be apparent in later sections. However, some people had specific features in mind that they articulated as motives for their trip:

One of the aspects of this area is this granite that we are sitting on... I love open granite slabs like this. So this alpine setting and the granite, I just love that. I grew up with that in California. It's just beautiful. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

I think it's the most beautiful part, the alpine lakes, lots of peaks over 8,000 feet. It's just breathtaking, meadows, all different kinds of diversity and vegetation. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]

Some people mentioned that they were looking for a particular type of setting, but one that was new or one that they had hoped to visit for some time. Some mentioned being drawn by a place's reputation for beauty:

> *I heard it was just gorgeous. The mountains and the snow and the cool lakes. The scenery and hike through it. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *I've just read some books about it and heard incredible feedback about the area. Heard these were the most incredible mountains in Oregon and had to come see for myself, and so far I would have to agree. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

A substantial segment – approximately 32% -- mentioned that being with **family or friends** was a central motive. Although the frequency of this motive did not vary much between day and overnight users, there were moderate differences with use level (27% low use, 40% moderate use, and 23% high use). However, these differences are difficult to interpret.

There were three prominent subthemes to the motive of being with family or friends. One related to companionship with friends, as expressed by a Mt. Jefferson visitor who said his objective was *fishing and just coming up here and meeting with friends and relatives.* An Alpine Lakes visitor also described this motive when he said his goal was to *hang out with my friends.*

Another main subtheme centered around relationships with a significant other, usually a spouse, but sometimes a sibling. These statements tended to focus on sharing special place meanings or having opportunities for intimate conversation.

> *To spend time with my brother. We are ten years apart so when I was growing up he was off in college already moved. That was one of my big goals on this trip was to spend time with my brother and sister-in-law. [ECW, Ov, Low, F]*

> *I hadn't been here for a long time, and I know how beautiful it is, and I wanted Tom to see this and everything. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *Probably just the opportunity to be together doing something both of us love. A really neat couple experience. [ALW, Day, Mod, F]*

> *I chose this because my sister is considering moving out here from New York and I wanted her to see this beauty. That's mainly why I chose this place this time. [EWC, Ov, Low, F]*

The third major subtheme focused on bonding with and development of children. Sometimes this was part of carrying out a family tradition, and sometimes the goal was to instill values and an environmental ethic in children.

> *It was something that my husband's grandfather did. The kids that were eight years or older, Dad and Grandpa would take them on an overnight hike. So this was the first year of our children doing that, and when the next one turns eight we will do it again. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]*

It's a good experience for my kids to go hiking, they have never been hiking. [ECW, Day, Mod, F]

This is kind of an annual trip and I promised them that we would definitely make good on that and so we would have our annual trip this year. [MJW, Ov, Low, F]

Many people (approximately 19%) mentioned a desire to **escape from civilization**, the city, the work world and its demands, and vehicles as important reasons for their trip, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

For us it is to come here and get away from everything. Get away from being in the city and being outside and camp out and look at the stars and see the sunrise. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

I'm in a business that's very busy and hectic and for me just to get away from my wife, the phone, my secretaries, my technicians, my sales people, I mean, it's just to get away. And to really, I'm telling you, you can just completely unwind up here. You know, your stomach pains go away, your head clears up. It's great. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]

It just takes me away from everyday, responsibilities, concerns, you've got to put them away because there's nothing you can do about them while you're out here. I think that's what I like the best about it, just being away. [ALW, Ov, Mod, F]

This type of motive was substantially more prevalent among Mt. Jefferson visitors than visitors to either of the other locations. This may have had something to do with our sampling at Mt. Jefferson occurring in late May and early June, at the beginning of the summer, although we cannot be sure. Additionally, people visiting on high use days (23%) were seeking escape somewhat more than people on low (9%) or moderate (16%) use days. Although we can only speculate, it is possible that people who visit wildernesses on weekends and holidays (at high use times) have lives that do not permit them to travel on weekdays, and maybe these types of people seek escape more intensely. However, the percentages were similar for day (15%) and overnight (20%) visitors.

For some people, escaping from daily demands allowed them to strengthen bonds with other people, and hence the two motives often overlapped.

You can just stop and sit here and listen to the wind and the river in the distance. I can listen to my kids. I know where they are because the sound carries so well. Just their little adventures of them finding things. How they learn about the environment that they are in. They love this. So that is very restful to me. There is no pressure. We don't have to leave right after lunch, we don't have to do anything. That's really nice to just enjoy it with no rush. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]

My husband and I like to come up here, we both work 55-60 hours week. When we are at home there are so many other things happening, takes away from time with each other. These

are the times we like to come and find the solitude, just the chance to be with each other. Talk about our goals, where we are going, where we've been, what's happening with us. Talk about our daughter, how she is doing. We have time to do that without the distraction. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]

Responses about seeking relaxation, tranquility, stress reduction, or peace and quiet were grouped together under a category of **mental refreshment**. Approximately 14% of all respondents mentioned such a motivation for their trip. The occurrence of this theme was similar for day and overnight users, as well across days with different use levels. However, Alpine Lakes visitors were substantially more likely to have such a goal than either Mt. Jefferson or Eagle Cap visitors. This may be because Mt. Jefferson visitors were often motivated by fishing, and Eagle Cap visitors were strongly motivated by the natural environment. Most examples of this theme were brief, fairly scripted statements of desiring to relax, as illustrated by the following:

Most important reason... I guess to relax. To get away from people, because I find that relaxing. [ALW, Day, Mod, M]

Single most important reason was, uh, the tranquility. [ALW, Day, Low, M]

I knew it would be a peaceful, pleasant experience. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]

People who sought mental refreshment generally had other motives as well, such as exercise or companionship. There was often overlap with the theme of escape, because people recognized that *it's a stress reliever to get away from work* and being *away from the grind* lets a person relax. We distinguished the two themes based on the idea that escape is a desire to get away from some stressful condition, while mental refreshment captures a desire for a positive outcome. Despite this logical connection, most people either (1) focused on the mental tranquility and refreshment goals without describing what they were getting away from; or (2) described getting away from the rush and pressure of city and work life, without explicitly stating the types of mental benefits they sought.

Several people mentioned **accessibility and distance** as important to their decision about where to hike. At Marion Lake, people said that the trail offers a short, easy hike, being *a two-hour, hour and a half, hike up into here and it's excellent fishing.* Proximity and ease of the trail were also important for several Pete Lake visitors in Alpine Lakes:

It was less than a two-hour drive from Seattle, so it's really nice that we could get away at lunchtime and be here in the early afternoon. A big part of picking this place was convenience and then the four-mile hike. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]

It's a close, quick hike so since I live nearby I can pop up here, come in, stay the night and come back out. [ALW, Ov, Mod, M]

Proximity was not a very common consideration for Eagle Cap visitors, most of whom had driven a long way from home. Day and overnight visitors did not differ in whether access was a consideration. Interestingly, however, somewhat more people mentioned that easy access or

proximity was a decision factor on low and moderate-use days (20% and 18%) than on high-use days (8%).

Some motives were important to individuals but were not prevalent overall (Table 10). These **less common motives** included feelings of connection, spirituality, and solitude.

Table 10. Less Commonly Mentioned Trip Motives

	MJW (n=57)	ALW (n=43)	ECW (n=48)	All Sites (n=148)
	----------*Percent*----------			
Seeking solitude, away from people	8.8	2.3	10.4	7.4
Tradition	7.0	2.3	0.0	3.4
Connect with nature	5.3	0.0	2.1	2.7
Not seeking solitude	1.8	0.0	6.3	2.7
Favorite place	0.0	0.0	6.3	2.0
Connect with God	1.8	2.3	0.0	1.4

A few people mentioned **spiritual** motives, either a connection with God or with nature:

> *As a Christian, I know that God created all of this. And so, for me, that creates a sense of awe and wonder at what he made. It's easy... to become distracted by all the things I have to do on my list. And so, pulling away and slowing down intentionally helps me. [ALW, Day, Low, M]*

> *I need to see how the land lays with the water and how the trees lay with the ground, how snow covers slopes, and the pitch of the slopes and the silhouette of peaks against the sky. I need to see all that stuff. It's incorporated into my genetics almost. It makes me feel whole. It makes me feel much happier to be a human being... I need to come out here, it makes me feel whole. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

Only three people – all overnight visitors to Eagle Cap – mentioned that they visited to return to a **favorite place**. However, five other people mentioned their trip as being part of a **tradition**.

> We *chose the Lostine because I hadn't been up the Lostine for a while... and I just remembered you just see the little streams going through the valley if you're headed to Eagle Cap, and I wanted to see that again before I got too old to come. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *I've been coming back here for 25 years, I like the area. I like the mountains, I like the peaks, I like the scenery and I like the solitude. That's what brings me back. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*

> *Annual event. Same guys, more or less, comes in every year...it's a nice get-away and it's kind of guys' weekend out, kind of thing. And, the guys that are all coming in here are more or less went through all of grade school, high school, college together kind of thing. It's the old neighborhood, so to speak. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]*

We searched people's statements for indications that they were seeking the types of experiences usually associated with wilderness, things like **primitive recreation**, **solitude**, or **freedom**. Many of the activities people mentioned were certainly aligned with such motives. However, very few people mentioned such experiences explicitly, and almost no one mentioned seeking feelings of solitude, like *seclusion*, or *getting away from people*. We had expected this to be a more prominent motive for people visiting on low use days compared to high use days, but this was not the case (6% on low use days; 10% on high use days). In fact, some people explicitly said they were *not really seeking solitude*; rather their goals were to be with friends, get exercise, or to enjoy nature. Others explained that solitude wasn't really *my focus today*, but that they could have found it have *if I had wanted to*. Nevertheless, a few people did time their trips to avoid crowds:

> *I like solitude, definitely that's an important thing... The Lakes Basin is a tough one because there are people here. I came on a Tuesday hoping it wouldn't be as crowded but it was, but that's life. This place is pretty well known these days. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]*

Freedom, challenge, and accomplishment were similarly rare as motives. One person mentioned that climbing the Eagle Cap gave a *sense of fulfillment, coming out here and reaching the summit, being able to do that, support yourself – You just feel a sense of accomplishment.* Another described *the challenge of being out here*. However, these examples are notable exceptions. The three destinations we studied tended to attract people seeking escape, rejuvenation, and peace and quiet *in the woods*, rather than those who want to test themselves.

It should be evident from many of the excerpts provided above that people had **multiple motives** for their trips. The following examples demonstrate how individual might have unique combinations of motives, but that they often included social factors, activities, and particular setting attributes.

> *It's a combination really. Enjoy friends' company. Beautiful environment. The exercise. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

> *I don't know about one thing, I guess it's a combination of things. It's a combination of being able to just come and get away from the things that you normally deal with and I enjoy fishing and the fishing is usually pretty good up here. And I enjoy wildlife and I almost always get to see some of that. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

> *Getting in to nature. And being away from the pollution and so forth and just being able to have the smell of the fresh air. And seeing the wildlife, too. [MJW, Day, Hi, F]*

> *We were looking for something new that meets the parameters we were looking for, distance, difficulty. Something interesting, lakes typically have snakes and frogs and all those really great creatures. That's something for kids. [ALW, O, L, F]*

> *A fun experience with the group... coming to an area that's very unlike something we would have experienced at home. To be in nature, to be camping and hiking. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]*

Thoughts and Focus of Attention

We asked nearly all people what they had been thinking about recently on their trip. Because it was difficult to elicit in-depth reports of thoughts, we experimented with different question versions. In this section, we include only responses to the non-directive general question, "what have you been thinking about?" (which was asked everywhere) and not specific, targeted questions like "have you been thinking about work?" (which were only asked in some places). However, if topics like work arose in response to the general question, then they were included in our analysis.

We asked a separate question about the focus of people's attention. As might be expected, many of the things people said they were "focusing on" were the same things they were "thinking about." For instance, about 30% of people said they were focusing on emotions, close to the nearly 35% who said they were thinking about their emotions. Because people often mentioned their attentional focus in response to the question about thinking and mentioned thinking in response to the question about attentional focus, we combine findings from the two questions here, pointing out important differences where they appeared.

Some people found questions about their thoughts difficult or awkward to answer. Sometimes this was because people seemed genuinely unclear about what they had just been pondering, because they were *not actually thinking at all, were* in *a zen-like state of just awareness and just being,* or because their *mind doesn't kind of hone in on any one thing.* As one Alpine Lakes visitor put it,

> *What I'm thinking about when I'm hiking isn't really thinking. It's not something that I really put into words, you know, just kind of images and emotion that you don't really think in complete sentences at that point. [ALW, ?, Hi, ?]*

Other times, it appeared that people found the question to be unusual or uncomfortable when coming from a stranger, as illustrated in this exchange:

> *I: So, as you're sitting on the lake, what kinds of things have you been thinking about?*
> *R: (Pause). Oh. (Pause). I don't know. (Chuckle). I'm just thinking about fishing, I guess.*
> *I: Yeah? Well, that's good. Okay. (Pause)*
> *R: I can't really say what I was thinking about, but, just fishing. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

With these caveats in mind, people mentioned thinking or focusing on the physical setting, specifically the natural environment, the most often (Table 11). However, activities also featured prominently. Many people also described their feelings or, to a lesser extent, thoughts of a personal nature. Attention to wildlife stands out as quite prevalent as well. Each of these themes is discussed below.

Table 11. Primary Categories of Focus of Attention and Thought

	MJW (n=62)	ALW (n=57)	ECW (n=60)	All Sites (n=179)
	Percent			
Natural environment	69.4	89.5	86.7	81.6
Activities	64.5	57.9	51.7	58.1
Affect/emotion	40.3	56.1	45.0	46.9
Wildlife	50.0	40.4	33.3	41.3
Family, friends, own group	25.8	28.1	26.7	26.8
Recreational facilities, developments, trail	24.2	22.8	21.7	22.9
Self/personal concerns	21.0	28.1	13.3	20.7
Senses	14.5	21.1	16.7	17.3
Somatic feelings	6.5	19.3	18.3	14.5
Other people/social environment	8.1	7.0	10.0	8.4

The **natural environment** dominated most people's thoughts and focus, although there was a substantial difference between locations. Features of the environment tended to be mentioned much more often as a focus of attention (approximately 80%) than as a subject of thoughts (approximately 35%).

People's statements about the environment ranged from general references to *scenery* to specific features (e.g., *lakes*) to very specific details of the environment (e.g., *the water glistening, lapping against the bank*). General references like *beautiful surroundings*, *looking around*, or *enjoying the scenery* were classified as "scenery" (Table 12). Between 30 and 40% of people commented on these features, and remarks were frequently accompanied by a sense of appreciation or wonder: *It's just unbelievable – It's beautiful, amazing, it's a magical place.* An Eagle Cap visitor explained that she *never imagined the mountains being like they are. The meadows are amazing and they are in the middle of a big mountain. It's just unreal.*

Table 12. Thinking about and Focus of Attention on the Natural Environment

	MJW (n=62)	ALW (n=57)	ECW (n=60)	All Sites (n=179)
	Percent			
Scenery (general)	32.3	36.8	40.0	36.3
Specific features:				
Any features	69.4	89.5	86.7	81.6
Trees/vegetation	35.5	57.9	35.0	42.5
Water	27.4	64.9	35.0	41.9
Mountains	17.7	43.9	38.3	33.0
Weather	21.0	22.8	25.0	22.9
Snow	27.4	28.1	5.0	20.1
Geologic features	8.1	5.3	21.7	11.7

When the more substantive responses were classified by type of landscape feature, vegetation and water were most often mentioned, although most people mentioned more than one type of feature. There were notable differences among the three research locations, with people interviewed at Alpine Lakes being most likely to mention each of the categories except geologic features and weather. It is unclear why this pattern emerged, although we can think of at least two explanations. One is that we tended to ask more questions about thoughts and probe more deeply about them at Alpine Lakes, which would mean that the difference could be an artifact of our method. Alternatively or in addition, the lower attention and thought paid to the environment by Mt. Jefferson visitors could reflect the intense focus on fishing at Marion Lake. The substantial difference between sites in attention to mountains is likely a result of the heavy forest in Mt. Jefferson, which largely obscures all views. Eagle Cap visitors were moderately more likely to mention rocks and other geological features, probably because of their greater prominence in that landscape.

Many of the types of features people mentioned and their enjoyment of them are not surprising and support quantitative research findings that people attend to the natural environment, particularly mountains and water (Herzog 1985, 1987). However, our qualitative approach did reveal some nuances in the ways people thought about and paid attention to these features.

First, many people expressed thoughts that indicated a feeling of **immersion** in the environment, without much concentrated thought. This was expressed as an appreciation of the *whole surroundings*, reveling in *all that's around me*, and *taking it all in*, as illustrated in the following examples:

> *Listening to the stream, as I look at this it is just tranquil and beautiful, I love the trees, I love the granite, it's gorgeous. The wildflowers... and I think just the ruggedness of it. [ECW, Ov, Low, F]*

> *I think for me the most important process in the mountains is to be able to sit still and just act as a conduit and absorb all of the sensorial stuff that is happening. If I'm really lucky there is the feeling that I'm in an eternal moment, that this moment is eternal. That there seems to be a timelessness, that there is no beginning of the trail or end of the trail or beginning of the day or end of the day. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

Conversely, other people engaged in reflective thought or "**analysis**" of the environment they explored. Frequently this involved attempting to develop explanations for phenomena they observed or thinking about how the environment had changed or evolved, as illustrated in the following passages.

> *I was observing the stream here... I was noticing that it's not real high, so that the snow pack is greatly diminishing up at the headwaters. I was noticing how there's a washed-out bank down here and how it looks out of place in these kinds of surroundings. It's more typical of what you would see on a stream that has a lot of logging activity for instance. I was looking at the little undercut bank on the other side and looking at how the water rushes into it, but it just has kind of a little bit of an undercut. And, a nice mossy bank hanging over with some roots and how that has survived much more than the other bank down below me, but, the way*

the hydraulics of the river are, it's obvious why this one has survived and that one hasn't. [ALW, Day, Low, M]

We stopped and looked at those two huge Doug firs and thought 'how come there aren't more of them?' Have they logged it, that was a question we talked to each other about. [ALW, Day, Mod, M]

I was actually looking at the U-shaped valleys, and thinking about how long it took to get this way, how the Lostine River did all of this work and made it like it is. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

One thing I've noticed is that there's more dead trees than there were 40 years ago, and I don't know if I didn't notice them as much then or if there really are more. It just seems like there's more dead trees. And I don't know why, but maybe moth-kill or beetle-kill. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]

I've been looking at the flowers, that's one of the things I'm kind of interested in. Looking at the knotweed here and wondering why it was named that and looking for anything new. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]

On the way up through the valley you could see one site where the trees have all been devastated. Figure it was some kind of disease because you couldn't see any burn char marks. It's kind of sad that that whole one hillside is just nothing but dead trees. Probably took several hundred years to grow. How is that side ever going to get reforested? [ECW, Ov, Low, M]

Rockslides down the hill - where they start. How they come down and widen out. Get their inertia force and come down and leave a devastating trail... Right down there is a good example of where it went across the creek and up the other side and some of the bigger trees survived. As the force was going across and back and up the other side, it slowed down and stopped and knocked a lot of trees over on the other side, but a lot of the bigger ones over there stayed. [EWC, Day, ?, M]

There's so much dead wood on the trail. And, you just know it's a matter of time. It's a time bomb ready to go off. If there's a fire up here it's going to be a bad fire because there's so much dead wood. And in 20 years, it's gotten worse. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]

I was looking at the trail and, well, these little white flowers around here... Wishing I knew what kind of trees were around me and I don't. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]

A number of people mentioned that they were reflecting on how the environment changed as they moved through it or the **variety** of features and conditions. This captivation of attention strongly resembles "soft fascination" as described in the literature on attention restoration (Kaplan 1995).

We've got a camp that is just a picture perfect window between the trees and the mountain and it's just glorious. Like I was telling Kelly it's like a big screen TV. You got this huge

picture that is beautiful, it keeps changing, and you can't stop looking at it. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

I'm always absolutely wowed at how God picks out colors and textures... how a dragonfly will land on a flower, or a butterfly will be the perfect color to enhance the color of the flower that it loves to seek out. [ALW, Day, Hi, F]

There's so much variety – the trees, the mountains, the rocks, different colors of the rocks. [ECW, Day, ?, M]

The trees, lot of diversity as far as the species of trees up here and this particular – this old growth forest is pretty awesome.... you've got old-growth hemlock, old-growth Doug fir, a lot of cedar, you've got Pacific yew up here, just a menagerie of trees. You see effects of fire and, I mean, it's just a great ecosystem. [MJW, Day, Low, M]

The air and the water and the lake. The water glistening, lapping against the bank...We were looking at these, which I think are lichens growing through all of the area in the rocks. Little black spots growing on the rocks. How much life there is growing everywhere. It's not just the trees and the grass and the flowers. All this little kind of stuff. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

For some people, the focus on the environment was influenced by their attention to a task at hand. Specifically, people often mentioned that hiking was causing them to focus on *looking down so I don't trip*, rather than the environment around them. As one Eagle Cap visitor put it, when hiking, *most of the time I look down. I guess I should look up more but I'm more of a "I want to get there" kind of person.*

Nearly one-quarter of respondents mentioned the **weather** when asked about thoughts or focus of attention. People did not mention weather much more often on unpleasant days (38%) than on nice days (29%). However, overnight users (29%) were more likely to mention weather than day users (13%), and people traveling on high use days were least likely to mention weather (19%, versus 30% on low use days and 27% on moderate use days). Of those who mentioned weather, the most common remarks were positive, such as the *weather is perfect*, *we're really enjoying the temperature of the day*, *how blue the sky is*, or *it was nice to have a rain free evening and a sunny morning*. Just over 20% of people mentioned bad weather, rain, or cold temperatures. Another 10% mentioned being concerned about changing weather, wondering *what the weather had in store for us*, and *hoping the weather cooperates* or *will blow through*. Interestingly, 17% of those who mentioned weather commented on their appreciation of aspects like *wind and the sound of the wind in the trees*.

When **snow** covered trails or destinations, it had a significant impact on people's experiences, particularly if it causes them to lose the trail or have to search for a snow-free camp. Nearly all references to snow were from visitors to Mt. Jefferson and Alpine Lakes, because interviewing at these sites occurred when snow was still present. People at Mt. Jefferson were worried about *watching where you step*, particularly because there was a difficult snowfield across a scree slope. People described this place as *very scary*, and one reported that he *fell to my waist a couple of times*. For another it was *kind of nip and tuck*. A few people mentioned losing the trail

in the snow, or even getting lost: w*e found a little area with no snow but you went 10 yards in any direction, it was 4 or 5 feet of snow. And we couldn't find the trail. We spent hours looking for it.*

When we were at Alpine Lakes, snow didn't prevent access to Pete Lake, but it did inhibit traveling much beyond the lake. For instance, one group had a *long discussion about whether or not it'd be worth the effort [to] climb some rocks and posthole a few times* in order to reach a higher lake. By that time in the season, however, a few people noted that *it was fun to hit the snow patches every now and then,* or that *the snow-covered jagged peaks are really pretty.*

In sum, the natural environment was by far the primary focus of attention and also dominated people's thoughts. Nearly everyone who mentioned focusing on or thinking about scenic features of the natural environment mentioned them in a positive light. Searching for negative examples, we found only this one:

> *It's pretty good. It's nice to get a view of Three Fingered Jack and if you go over to where that creek comes down you can see Mt. Jefferson and stuff. But to be honest not quite as good, because hiking into other places you can see Three Sisters and Three Fingered Jack and all the mountains around. It's better than some, it's pretty good, but I've seen a lot better. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]*

Turning to the different comparative contexts of interest in this study, the specific aspects of the natural environment that people were focusing on or attending to differed substantially across the three study locations. Additionally, day users were moderately more likely to mention water and substantially more likely to mention vegetation than overnight users. Conversely, overnight users were moderately more likely to mention paying attention to the weather and to snow conditions. Interestingly, there were also substantial differences between people contacted on low use versus high use days. Specifically, people on low use days were substantially more likely to mention thinking about or paying attention to mountains (46%) and water (64%) than people on high use days (24% and 33%). Additionally, people on low use days were moderately more likely to attend to vegetation (46%) and weather (31%) than people on high use days (37% and 19%).

Our questions asked people about their thoughts and focus of attention in the time immediately before we approached. Therefore, it is not surprising that many people were thinking about or focusing on their **activities** (Table 13). Because most of this material pertains to the immediate conscious experience, it is developed in more depth in Johnson (in preparation), and we provide only a brief overview here.

Table 13. Thinking about and Focus of Attention on Activities

	MJW (n=62)	ALW (n=57)	ECW (n=60)	All Sites (n=179)
	----------Percent----------			
Any activity	64.5	57.9	51.7	58.1
Camp related/food	24.2	26.3	20.0	23.5
Hiking	24.2	26.3	15.0	22.3
Fishing	38.7	8.8	11.7	20.1
Sitting, relaxing	12.9	7.0	15.0	12.3
Photography	3.2	12.3	5.0	6.7

Many people (between 30 and 41%, depending on the research site) were interviewed in their camps, where they reported focusing on camping activities ranging from *getting the tent set up*, to *gathering firewood*, *trying to get a fire going*, *cooking breakfast*, *basic needs of water purification*, *getting a tarp set up* in case of rain, and *packing our stuff up* or *tearing down camp* to leave.

Hiking was also a common focus of thought and attention, probably because 49% of study participants were interviewed along the trail. Comments on hiking ranged from *just walking down the trail* to climbing *the straight, direct east face of Marion Peak and then traversing that whole ridge all the way up to Marion Mountain and back down.* While some people enjoyed *looking for wildflowers* during their hike, for others it involved *getting a little tired and just concentrating on keeping one foot in front of the other*. When trail conditions were bad, some people concentrated on *trying to remember our route back – it's been so broken up because of the blow downs and everything.*

Besides camp activities and hiking, few other activities were commonly mentioned as the focus of thought or attention. A notable exception was fishing, although this varied substantially across research sites. A small but notable percentage of people were *just hanging out, taking it easy* or *sitting around enjoying the campfire*. Usually this occurred at camp, but sometimes it was along the trail. Sitting allowed people to *just soak in the quiet, take it all in, enjoy the view*, or *just sit and kind of daydream.* These sentiments were quite different than those expressed by people we interviewed while in the midst of hiking.

Some differences in activity focus between day and overnight visitors were obvious. For example, 35% of overnight visitors were focused on camp chores, maintenance, or food, compared to 7% of day users. For the most part, though, day and overnight users were quite similar in thinking about or focusing on activities. On high use days, camp activities were mentioned substantially less. Besides this, there were no notable differences across use levels for activities.

Nearly 40% of respondents said that **wildlife** was the focus of their attention and about 10% said they had been thinking about wildlife. Most commonly people mentioned birds, in part due to the prevalence of osprey and eagles at Marion Lake (Table 14). Insects were next most frequently mentioned, although the differences were moderately large across the sites, due to the mosquito swarms at Alpine Lakes in July.

Table 14. Thinking about and Focus of Attention on Wildlife

	MJW (n=62)	ALW (n=57)	ECW (n=60)	All Sites (n=179)
	----------Percent----------			
Wildlife - Any	50.0	40.4	33.3	41.3
Birds	32.3	24.6	13.3	23.5
Insects	14.5	26.3	10.0	16.8
Large animals	22.6	10.5	11.7	15.1
Small animals	9.7	8.8	8.3	8.9
Fish or aquatic life	16.1	7.0	1.7	8.4

Although these figures might suggest that people saw wildlife often, in fact this was not the case, because many people said they were *checking out the ridges trying to see anything; looking for any signs of animals, deer, bear*; wondering *if I'm going to see the osprey and if I'm going to see the fledglings at all;* or looking unsuccessfully *for bighorn sheep out on the rocks.* In other words, many people were focused on searching for wildlife, even though they hadn't yet seen any.

People who did see wildlife enjoyed observing animal behavior:

> *We had a campfire, and we had two elk come up to us, and I put a flashlight on them, and they bolted. They ran off, which is pretty typical, and then they wouldn't get within 40 yards of us. Then the second night, they came up again, I put the flashlight on them and they began grazing. And they grazed for like, 10-15 minutes, just within a few yards of camp. And I've never seen elk do that. [ECW, Day, Hi, M]*

> *I was looking at the osprey, thinking that they might have a nest with babies because they seemed to come over here and say, "what are you doing here?" They seemed to fly kind of low over here. And I didn't think they were just fishing. They were like, "get out of here." [MJW, Ov, Low, F]*

> *I watch the osprey. They're out there every day, you know, doing their osprey thing... They're not fishing very successfully out there today. I saw them hit the water about forty times. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]*

Sometimes encounters with wildlife were incidents where animals took food, such as when one person explained that *there was a little chipmunk coming up and I was feeding him peanuts* or another group's report that *squirrels actually came in and attacked our food last night.* At Marion Lake in Mt. Jefferson, habituated deer were noted by some visitors who said deer will walk right up to people, being *pretty used to humans up here.*

References to insects, although infrequent, were varied, from the person who commented on seeing a dying caterpillar *just kind of keeling over in the mud* to another who saw *an amazing bunch of monarch butterflies right on the water -- there must have been about a dozen of them in a ball.* However, most often when talking about bugs people mentioned the mosquitoes. The

bugs led some people to be preoccupied with *slapping and walking* and *trying to keep bugs out of my tent and off of me.*

Attention to and thoughts about wildlife differed moderately to substantially among the three wildernesses, with a larger percentage of Mt. Jefferson visitors reporting all types of wildlife except insects. The types of animals people noticed also differed across wildernesses. At Mt. Jefferson, the focus was on deer and osprey. In Eagle Cap, people were looking for bighorn sheep and noticed ground squirrels and chipmunks. There were no important differences between day and overnight visitors in attention to wildlife. The only notable difference across use levels was that people on low use days were moderately more likely to report paying attention to small animals.

In response to our questions about thoughts and attention, nearly one third of people mentioned reflecting on **emotions (affect)** (Table 15). Details related to feelings or emotions will be explored in depth in a later section about a question specifically targeting moods and feelings. In the context of what they were thinking about or focusing on, people almost always used expressions like *relaxed, peaceful, letting my mind wander*, or simply *enjoyment.* These are captured as "positive affect." Almost no one mentioned negative emotions. Whether this is due to a strong social norm against reporting negative feelings or a genuine lack of such feelings is difficult to discern. However, other studies show that affect is often highly positive in natural environments (Farber & Hall in press; Hull 1990; Hull & Michaels 1995).

Table 15. Thinking about and Focus of Attention on Emotion

	MJW (n=62)	ALW (n=57)	ECW (n=60)	All Sites (n=179)
	----------*Percent*----------			
Positive affect	38.7	50.9	41.7	43.6
Negative affect	1.6	1.8	3.3	2.2

Although the likelihood that people mentioned positive or negative affect varied somewhat with wilderness, there were no differences between day and overnight visitors, nor did the frequency of mention vary with use level.

Nearly 10% of people mentioned thinking about some form of **spiritual connection**, usually *being in touch with God.* When we include similar statements that appeared in response to a question about people's moods, nearly 17% of people reported such thoughts, with more than 20% of Alpine Lakes visitors mentioning some form of religious inspiration (Table 16). Nearly all such references described appreciation and or awe for God's creation:

> *I reflect on the creator and what he created. And I appreciate him as being an artist, like as if I was at a museum and I was looking at artwork. I think it makes me praise him for what he's done. [ALW, Day, Hi, F]*

God mostly, evidence of God and his word and promises to us...His creation is awesome to me, it's just beautiful. There is no way to recreate it, there is no way to describe it. [ECW, Ov, Mod, F]

I've been thinking about my creator, who created all this, and what a marvelous mind He must have, to be able to come up with a creation like this, and still care about me. It's a religious experience to be out here because this is his handiwork. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

It's kind of a spiritual thing with me. I mean, every time I get here I'll go to the base, where we launch from over there, and I can look up at the peak up here and say hello to it and just say hello to God. I mean, thank you for everything. This is an absolutely beautiful gift he's given us here... I don't go to church every day or every week but this gets me a little more in touch with him up there. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]

Table 16. Thinking about and Focus of Attention on Spiritual Connection

	MJW (n=64)	ALW (n=57)	ECW (n=62)	All Sites (n=183)
	----------*Percent*----------			
God	4.7	21.1	17.7	14.2
Connect with nature	0.0	5.3	3.2	2.7
Either	4.7	26.3	21.0	16.9

Note: Table includes responses to questions about mood or feelings as well as thoughts and focus

Others mentioned taking time to *pray for family* or *trying to get more in touch with what God wants us to do in our lives*:

We were just talking about before we get out of the mountains, we want to pull aside... praying about the anticipated challenges that we expect – we know there's going to be challenges we don't know of. [ALW, Day, Low, F]

For a few people, the spiritual connection they described was with nature, not necessarily God:

Nature and being outside is kind of a spiritual side to me more than religion or going to church. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]

I guess you might say catharsis to my spirit to being in these kinds of places. [ALW, Day, Low, M]

I would go buggy if I don't come out into some big mountains every once in a while... It brings up a lot of the basic concepts of spiritual, entity of the divine, the entity of creation. Is this some beautiful accident or is this some guided plan? Regardless of whatever way you want to slice that metaphysical pie, it's necessary to keep this here... to know that this exists for people, just on a certain level is uplifting the soul. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]

The percentage of people focusing on or thinking about spiritual connections was substantially lower in Mt. Jefferson than the other two study areas. However, there were no notable differences between day and overnight users or on days with different levels of use.

Approximately one quarter of respondents said they were thinking about or focusing on **friends or family**. People were thinking about family more often than family was the focus of attention, probably because people were sometimes thinking about family members who were not present on the trip. Most discussions of friends and family arose in the context of the ICE and therefore are developed in depth in Johnson (in preparation) rather than here. Additionally, the overall effects of people's groups on their experience will be discussed in depth under a separate section below. Here, were provide only a brief overview of how family and friends emerged in the context of focus of attention and thought.

When people were thinking about family who were present on their trip, often their thoughts concerned strengthening relationships, as for the Mt. Jefferson visitor who wanted *a nice experience* with his son who was returning to the Navy, or another who was passing on the family tradition of fishing to his son. One couple noted that the trip gave them an opportunity to talk about their upcoming wedding and future, *because we don't get to do that a lot – when we're home it's the everyday stuff and you don't get to sit down and really talk about things of that nature.*

In other cases, thoughts were about immediate interactions with friends or family on the trip, from wondering whether friends *will give me a bad time* for not catching fish to *getting fresh bait out to Angelica so she could hopefully catch some fish*. Some enjoyed sitting around the fire, *telling all the stories about camping*. For people traveling with children, group dynamics on the trip was a major focus of attention, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> *Probably reflecting on mostly the hiking and how well the boys did, no complaining and they carried their own stuff. We were a unit and I just marvel that we come out here and work together. They are troopers and I've been impressed about their attitude towards this whole thing. Hopefully it will carry on when we get home. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]*

Other times, thoughts about family and friends were about *family matters* or people back home, as for the woman who was discussing with her friend how her fiancé was at the beach or another who had been reflecting on how much she would have liked to have a close friend along on the hike.

The likelihood that people had been thinking about friends or family was remarkably consistent for the three wildernesses. There were also no differences between day and overnight visitors or between people who visited on days with different levels of use.

Approximately 20% of people said they were thinking about or focusing on the trail, probably because so many were intercepted while hiking and our questions asked about that point in time (Table 17). A few others mentioned other types of **recreational developments**, such as campsites or toilets (which were present at Marion Lake and Pete Lake).

Table 17. Thinking about and Focus of Attention on Recreational Amenities/Trail

	MJW (n=62)	ALW (n=57)	ECW (n=60)	All Sites (n=179)
	----------*Percent*----------			
Trail	22.6	19.3	20.0	20.7
Other recreational amenities	4.8	3.5	1.7	3.4
Either (trail or amenities)	24.2	22.8	21.7	22.9

In Mt. Jefferson, many of these comments related to the snowy trail condition. People were worried about *watching our step*, being unable to follow the trail, or falling through the snow. At Alpine Lakes, people were more concerned about *how we were going to get over all those streams* or being unable to follow the trail in the snow beyond Pete Lake. Some mentioned the *amount of water that's on the trail* or how the *slippery mud* made hiking challenging. Eagle Cap visitors' remarks about trail conditions varied, from the person who mentioned *how soft the trail is,* seeming *really easy on the feet*, to people who were concerned about *where I put my feet* during steep descents.

Attention and thought about trails and amenities did not differ notably across sites. However, day users were moderately more likely to be focusing on the trail than overnight users. Differences by use level were substantial, with people on low use days being the most likely to be thinking about or attending to the trail. The reasons for these differences are unknown.

Approximately 21% of people mentioned thinking about **personal issues**, such as work, personal goals, or memories (Table 18). People enjoyed having time to *think about life* and *not having any distractions around you to help you think about what kinds of things you want to do in your life.* One Alpine Lakes visitor described it as *organizing everything in my brain,* while an Eagle Cap visitor called it *getting the brush out and scrubbing off all the tarnish from the city.*

Table 18. Thinking about and Focus of Attention on Personal Issues

	MJW (n=62)	ALW (n=57)	ECW (n=60)	All Sites (n=179)
	----------*Percent*----------			
Any personal issues	21.0	28.1	13.3	20.7
Life/goals	11.3	17.5	8.3	12.3
Work	6.5	12.3	5.0	7.8
Memories	6.5	7.0	3.3	5.6

A Mt. Jefferson visitor found himself reflecting on w*hat I've done in my relationships with all the people I'm with and my past and what I need to do this next year with them.* Similarly, an Alpine Lakes visitor was thinking about *home a lot and things in my personal life.*

A small number of people said they were reflecting on memories, usually reminiscing about past trips, but sometimes feeling nostalgia for other wildernesses or places:

I haven't been here in such a long time – I used to come up here all the time with my friends camping and stuff – it was kind of a little bit of a mental reminiscing and kind of thinking about back when and what all was here and camping and kind of a lot of visiting the past, mentally. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]

We've been coming up here for a long time so we think about past trips and trips that we didn't get up here because the weather was too bad. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]

I had a really enjoyable hike today and I was just thinking about how I miss Colorado and I miss all the outdoor stuff that I used to do there. [ALW, Day, Mod, F]

Sometimes thoughts about home and personal life were about less serious topics, like the *Seattle Film Festival* or *Oregon State football*. However, some people said they were thinking a *little bit too much about work* and wishing they *could stay up here longer* to avoid returning to it. Many of these mentioned that when work pops into their heads, *they try to think about something else immediately*. Some seemed to be able to escape work thoughts altogether: *I don't think I have thought about work once, so that's great.* However, for others, work or home issues were too pressing to escape:

I thought about work on the way down, my job. I work at A&W and I'm trying to get to a supervisor position. I'm really struggling getting there, they don't think I can do it. [ALW, Ov, Mod, F]

I'm getting ready to go back to work pretty soon and I've been thinking about that. What I need to do before I go. [ALW, Ov, Low, M]

Buying a house. Sorry. Pretty heavy in my head right now. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

Focus on and thoughts about personal issues differed somewhat across wildernesses, with people in Eagle Cap moderately less likely to mention such issues than visitors to Alpine Lakes. However, there were no differences in frequency between day and overnight users, and there was no difference between people contacted on days with different use levels. Evidently, the likelihood that wilderness visitors are thinking about or focusing on issues like work, personal goals, or memories is fairly insensitive to contextual variation.

Nearly 20% of people mentioned their **senses** when asked about their thoughts or focus of attention. Most often people mentioned the unique and pleasant smells, like the *sweet pine smell in the air* or a *really strong, herbal forest floor*. One person noted that

Sometimes you come across and you see these wildflowers or whatever they are and you smell the fragrance of them, all the different plants that have smells, the trees too. Everything has its own little smell and I think when they're all together you get a big whiff of it, it's like this big trail mix of smells. [ALW, Ov, Low, M]

For others, the sounds were captivating, especially the *sound of rushing water* and how *every creek you come to is a little bit different*, the *way the breeze feels*, or the *sound and feel of the wind*. Finally, a few people mentioned dwelling on specific colors in the environment:

> *Looking at the different colors of the rocks, along the way was something that I was noticing... Just the different tones of grays and tones of colors in the trees and in the forest. [ALW, Day, Low, M]*

> *Just the green. You just sit here and look at the vertical, the horizontal, the slopes, the colors, it's amazing. It's just so much different from being in town. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]*

Focus of attention or thought on senses displayed some interesting differences across users. Although there were no notable differences among the three study sites, day users were moderately more likely to be attending to their senses than overnight users (26% vs. 12%). People on low use days were moderately more likely to be doing so than people on either moderate or high use days (28% vs. 12% and 16%).

When asked about their thoughts or focus, some people described how they were feeling physically, which we labeled **somatic feelings**. Because these feelings will be discussed in their own section dealing with a question specifically about physical well-being, we only mention the most prevalent types of thoughts here. Nearly everyone who was consciously focusing on their physical condition mentioned challenges with the hike, like *how my pack sits on my back* or *how badly my knees hurt.* Some mentioned *getting kind of tired* or *having to stop like every two feet.* However, fatigue was not always bad, as one Alpine Lakes visitor observed:

> *The hike up yesterday was a physical strenuous hike, with a heavy backpack. That was good though. It was relaxing, you get what you came for, take your mind off of work and stuff. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]*

The remaining few somatic feelings that emerged as the focus of attention or thought had to do with acute issues like having a stomach that *been a little upset from my lunch or something* or focusing on how an insect bite on the hand was *very itchy* and made it *impossible to grip anything.*

Somatic feelings differed moderately among the three research sites, being mentioned infrequently (6%) at Mt. Jefferson, but more commonly by visitors to Alpine Lakes (19%) and Eagle Cap (18%). Surprisingly, day and overnight users did not differ in their likelihood of focusing on or thinking about their physical well being. However, people visiting on moderate use days were somewhat more likely to mention such aspects than people on either low or high use days (31% vs. 20% and 14%).

Very few people (approximately 8% overall) mentioned thinking about or focusing on **other visitors** or, conversely, the lack of other visitors, when asked about their thoughts or focus of attention. This is not to say that people were unaware of other people during their trips, as will be evident in a later section, only that people's immediate thoughts and focus generally were not on other people outside of their own group. A few people mentioned having pleasant interactions

with others, *just kind of chatting* with other people or *stopping to say hello*. One Mt. Jefferson visitor described an unusually pleasant interaction with a youngster from another group:

> *Some of the people out on the lake today? They're the nicest people...There was a little boy, probably 12 years old, in a single man raft. He had two fish, probably 12, 14 inch fish. He came over, he rowed over, he asked us what we were using. Really polite. Really nice kid. Wished us luck and kept on going. I don't see kids like that very often. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

Although a few people mentioned thinking how *it's really nice* that they were *one of the few people out here*, most often when people were actively thinking about others they expressed feelings that there *were too many people everywhere* or that the number of people is *like overkill*, because they had *just never seen so many people on the trail at one time*. A few overnight visitors we intercepted on their way into the wilderness expressed concern about *what it's going to be like up there*, because they worried they might not be able to find a campsite. As one Mt. Jefferson camper noted,

> *I passed seven people coming in and I wonder if they're going to the same camp that I would like to go to. So, that's kind of the motivation to keep a fast pace. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]*

Another couple reported that they had difficulty deciding how to plan their day because of a *concern that there would be a lot of people coming up to Pete Lake today*. This concern dictated where they chose to camp.

We searched for examples of people whose comments about others indicated a desire to see more people and found only this single, highly anomalous example:

> *I was really worried the first night because I'm a real people person, and being alone out here when there wasn't anybody to see. We camped by that last creek, because it was dark and we couldn't find our way in. And, I'm just such a people person that all the horror stories that you hear about people getting hurt and stuff, and so I wasn't very comfortable. [ALW, Ov, Mod, F]*

The focus of thought or attention on other visitors did not differ among the three wildernesses, and day and overnight users were equally likely to mention this topic. Surprisingly, people on high use days were not much more likely to say they were thinking about other visitors (11%) than people on moderate (4%) or low use days (8%). Overall, though, attention to and thought about other visitors was quite limited.

Mood or Feelings

Most visitors were asked questions about their mood or feelings. Nearly everyone reported **positive emotions** (Table 19). Quite often, especially in Mt. Jefferson before we developed focused probes about this topic, people simply said **general positive** things such as *just enjoying the peacefulness* or *having fun*. Many people mentioned that being out in nature provided a different kind of feeling and a release from everyday concerns, as evident from the number of people who earlier said they were seeking escape and to get away from daily life when we asked about the reasons for their trip.

Positive affect was very often put in contrast to daily life back home. By far the most common specific affective state was one of **mental refreshment**. As described in the section on focus of attention and thought, people described how their wilderness trip gave them a highly valued escape from everyday life. Common terms people used include *relaxing*, *serene*, *peaceful*, and *tranquil*. One person described it as *having a weight off my shoulders*. Several examples illustrate the depth of contentment people felt:

> *I feel happy, I feel at peace with myself. Definitely getting all the stress out from normal life... I love this place it makes me feel happy, it makes me feel good. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

> *Very serene. Especially on a day like today where just the warmth and the cold water - I think it's a very cleansing area, for me anyway. I think with the river running past you, you feel somewhat rejuvenated in general. When you're sitting here, you feel decompressed and it's beautiful. I mean, it's trees and mountains and snow and fresh water and you just feel like you're back to basics...Kind of healing. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *I've been in a great mood. I've been super-stressed lately...but I've been completely, totally relaxed right now... I guess it just really makes me feel at peace with myself. Just calm and being able to feel really collected. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]*

Table 19. Positive Mood or Feelings

	MJW (n=57)	ALW (n=55)	ECW (n=56)	All Sites (n=168)
	----------Percent----------			
Any positive affect	91.2	96.4	92.9	93.5
General good, nice	82.5	67.3	58.9	69.6
Mental refreshment	57.9	69.1	62.5	63.1
Awe & inspiration	5.3	14.5	14.3	11.3
Perspective on life	3.5	14.5	8.9	8.9
Humility & appreciation	1.8	3.6	12.5	6.0
Freedom	7.0	5.5	1.8	4.8
Achievement, challenge	3.5	0.0	8.9	4.2
Exhilaration, excitement	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.6

Feelings of refreshment went hand in hand with gaining **perspective on life** for some visitors:

> *It gives me a perspective. It sort of removes me from daily life back in the city and gives me time to reflect, and reminds me that there are other things on the planet besides people. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *To connect with nature and be in nature. It nurtures me on a level that nothing else can. It just fills me up and I can go back and have my day again, and my week. It fills my heart and helps me see the bigger perspective of life. [ALW, Day, Mod, F]*

Besides these generally positive feelings, people described relatively few specific emotions. However, some people felt **awe or inspiration**, *being taken aback by the beauty of nature*, as

demonstrated by the visitor who described the Eagle Cap as a *beautiful, amazing, magical place.* Another described feeling the *sense of awe of nature...one breathtaking view after another.*

> *Every little thing that I see, it's like, wow, isn't this cool? It's amazing...It's kind of like if an artist came up with all this, we'd just be astounded. And then it just keeps going and going and going. It's like, wow. [ALW, Day, Low, F]*

> *No matter how many times I've come here to Marion Lake, it's like as soon as I come over that hump right there and see the lake it's always just wow, the view and the visual break from being in the woods the whole hike up. I guess awe maybe is a good word. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]*

Other people mentioned a sense of **humility or appreciation**. One Mt. Jefferson visitor reflected that *this place makes me feel glad to be part of the mystery of life*, while another said the place *makes you feel very small, but it makes you feel really good that you're able to see something so gorgeous and you get to participate in it.* An Alpine Lakes visitor expressed *gratitude that there are places like this and we can be here.* An Eagle Cap visitor related this conversation with his daughters:

> *I remember saying to the girls, don't you just feel really small? Everything is just so vast. I don't know if insignificant is the word, but just when you look at yourself in view of the entire planet. [ECW, Day, Hi, F]*

A small number of people mentioned feeling **freedom**. One Mt. Jefferson visitor pointed out that being there *makes me feel completely able to be myself,* while another observed that *you're responsible while at the same time you can do pretty much whatever you want, go wherever you want.* A young Alpine Lakes visitor phrased it as a matter of *just chilling*:

> *Just vegging out. It's nice to get away and not have to think about this or that. Don't care about watches or anything, just go when we want to and eat whenever. It's kind of cool to get away from structure. [ALW, Ov, Low, M]*

A few people mentioned feelings of **excitement** or *exhilaration.* One Eagle Cap visitor said hiking down from the top of the Eagle Cap made him feel *fairly euphoric, for lack of a better term.* Another found the refreshing environment to be *stimulating.*

> *I'm kind of an adrenaline junky, I like that. The fact that you're out here in the raw wilderness, there's always the chance of something happening makes it more exciting. It's not like walking down the sidewalk. So it probably made me appreciate that we are really in the wilderness. [ECW, O, Mod, M]*

Only a few people mentioned factors like challenge or **accomplishment.** Generally this was associated with the challenge of hiking, as exemplified by one Eagle Cap hiker:

> *Even though it was tough on me I enjoyed it. It was one of those things like how far can you push yourself, what are your limits. I just had to keep in mind put one foot in front of the*

other and sooner or later you'll get there. I had to keep that in my mind as I was coming up here, because there were a lot of times that I wanted to stop and sit down and say I can't go any further. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]

Approximately 9% of people mentioned **negative emotions** when asked about their mood or feelings (Table 20). While a few people described being irritable, most often the negative feelings related to being anxious or worried. In Mt. Jefferson, such feelings were almost always focused on the weather or difficulties with snow on the trail or around the lake:

A little apprehensive. That one guy falling in the lake, another guy screwing up his knees falling in the snow, we almost didn't make it, but ... I made it all the way here early, dropped my pack, went back and carried their pack in. I said, we're getting in because there's a dry spot. So, at first, I was a little apprehensive about it – if it rains, if it snows – but, we've had beautiful weather and the mood's been great. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]

I was actually a little bit stressed when we first got here because it was about 6:30 or so in the evening and it started to rain, which was also half snow, so we had to set up our tent quickly, gather wood quickly, and I don't think we're really properly equipped for severe bad weather. So, I was a little bit worried that that might cause us problems. But it didn't turn out to. [MJW, Ov, Mod, M]

The first night coming out, crossing that last creek, I'm going "this is it. I've had it. I'm not coming out any more. You know?" Because I'm not young anymore and trying to cross all that stuff. [ALW, Ov, Mod, F]

In Alpine Lakes and Eagle Cap, the reasons for negative emotions were more varied, ranging from feeling tired and dirty and moping to being irritated and upset with other campers who were breaking regulations and being inconsiderate.

Table 20. Negative Mood or Feelings

	MJW (n=57)	ALW (n=55)	ECW (n=56)	All Sites (n=168)
	----------*Percent*----------			
Any negative emotion	10.5	9.1	7.1	8.9
Anxiety, worry	8.8	3.6	0.0	4.2
General risk (environment)	0.0	0.0	3.6	1.2
Irritable	1.8	3.6	3.6	3.0

There were some notable differences across sites in emotions or affect. For instance, Mt. Jefferson visitors were substantially more likely to give general, vague responses like *good* or *fine* than visitors to Eagle Cap, possibly because our probing questions were less well developed during the first round of interviews. Alpine Lakes visitors were moderately more likely than Mt. Jefferson visitors to mention awe or perspective on life. Eagle Cap visitors were moderately more likely to mention humility and appreciation. Despite these differences, the patterns of

positive emotions were similar at all three locations. Negative emotions did not differ across wildernesses.

Day and overnight visitors were quite similar in the types of emotions they described, with the only difference being that day users were moderately more likely to give generic "good" replies (75% vs. 65%). Differences across use level strata for positive emotions were notable, but difficult to interpret. For instance, people on low use days were moderately more likely to report feeling freedom and mental refreshment. However, people visiting on moderate use days were somewhat more likely to report feeling awe or inspiration than visitors on either low or high use days. Interestingly, no one on low use days mentioned negative emotions. This contrasts with 9% of visitors on high use days and 17% of visitors on moderate use days.

Timelessness

A sense of timelessness or flow often characterizes "peak" experiences, and we wanted to know whether and why wilderness visitors had such experiences during their trips. We asked two related questions: "have you experienced a sense of timelessness or a feeling that time stood still?" and "has time mattered to you or have you lost track of time?" (Table 21).

Table 21. Experiences of Timelessness

	MJW	ALW	ECW	All Sites
	n=37	n=37	n=34	n=108
Timelessness/time stands still	----------*Percent*----------			
Yes	48.6	37.8	29.4	38.9
No or not yet	51.4	48.6	55.9	51.9
Sort of, partly	0.0	13.5	14.7	9.3
	n=8	n=45	n=20	n=73
Lost track of time/time doesn't matter	----------*Percent*----------			
Yes	62.5	57.8	75.0	63.0
No	37.5	26.7	20.0	26.0
Sort of, partly	0.0	15.6	5.0	11.0

Most people who responded to the second question (63%) responded that they *didn't care what time it is* because you *kind of disconnect from the clock while you're out here.* In fact, some mentioned that they had to *ask what day it is* or *really lost track of time.*

> *If Kevin didn't have his watch, I would never know what time it was nor would I really particularly care. I mean, my stomach tells me when it's time to eat and my body pretty much tells me it's time to go to bed now. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *I don't bring the watch and once I kind of get to the destination, and kind of feel like we're there, and then I stop paying attention to time and I pay attention to how close to sunset we're getting, or sunrise. [ALW, Ov, Low, M]*

A lack of concern over time was fostered by not having *to rush to do anything*, not *having to be anywhere*, being able to *forget about all the stuff you're doing and... focusing on being here*, or being able to *take it as it comes*.

> *I would just look at my watch to see how long we were hiking, but it doesn't really matter when we get back to the campsite, I could care less. [ALW, Day, Mod, F]*

> *[We] get up in the morning and no hurry to do anything. We make a plan, we go do that, have an awesome time, come back to camp and sit around, stay up until the sky is black and the stars are all out, go to bed and it's the same thing the next day but another trail. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*

Some people who said time did matter to them were trying to see *how long it takes* to get to a place, or they felt that they needed to *keep [to a] schedule*. Others were paying attention to time because they were *hungry* or had *people to look after*.

> *Hmm. No. I didn't lose track of time. Because we know we have, we know how long it took us to get up here so we wanted to get back kind of in a reasonable amount of time. [ALW, Day, Mod, F]*

People were more likely to lose track of time during restful moments when there was *nothing going on* – such as *just sitting watching the sunset over the lake* or *kicking back and relaxing and just laying out in the sunshine* – than when packing to leave or traveling to a destination. As one Eagle Cap backpacker said, *basically time matters to me when I'm hiking, how far am I traveling, how fast am I traveling, when's my next landmark. That's about the only time I think about time.*

Many people seemed to distinguish between losing track of time and a sense of timelessness, where *everything kind of stops*. Whereas most people were not particularly concerned about the time, only 39% said they had experienced timelessness. Those who did described such episodes as a *special moment* or *something magical*. One said that an evening along by the fire was the *peak of "in-tuneness" with nature and myself*. Some people described feeling like *time had flown by*, while for others it didn't *feel like any time has passed* at all.

> *When you're hiking you're not really thinking, you're just there. The here and now. The mountains, the birds, the flowers, or whatever else, you're not thinking about anything beyond that. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

Timelessness was promoted by a lack of worry, natural scenery, and peaceful moments. One Eagle Cap visitor said she had *definitely* had the feeling of timelessness when witnessing *a gorgeous scene, water rushing down, beautiful wildflowers, lovely background*. A Mt. Jefferson visitor reported a similar feeling when *sitting out on a log this morning and just watching the birds and, and everyone was quiet*. For a few people, concentrating on something like fishing made *time stand still*.

Several of the people who did not experience timelessness said either that their trip was too short or that they had *not been here long enough* to have such feelings. For them, it *usually takes a couple days* to get into that mode.

> *Not yet, that doesn't usually happen until the fourth or fifth day and you realize you're not hearing cars or phones. So it usually takes a few days. I have had that experience, but not on this trip yet. [ECW, Ov, Low, F]*

> *Not really. I guess some of it is maybe that's because it's a short weekend... This is only a day hike, or a half-day hike, and so you still kind of are in the frame of mind of "okay and then we're going to get back to camp and then we're going to make dinner." [ALW, ?, Hi, ?]*

A few people mentioned that *time always goes too fast* on wilderness trips, so they could not experience what we called timelessness. As one Eagle Cap visitor said, *the days go by fast even though you're not doing much, just hanging out.*

Finally, a few people were unsure how to answer our questions. They said things like *time kind of slows down maybe.*

> *Sort of. It's kind of like, we are at the point now where there's not a lot to do. We have camp set up and we are just hanging out. [ALW, Ov, Low, M]*

Timelessness and lack of care about time differed somewhat among the three wildernesses, with Mt. Jefferson visitors most likely to say they experienced moments when time stood still (timelessness). On the other hand, Eagle Cap visitors were most likely to say they lost track of time or didn't care what time it was. It is important to note that this second question was added near the end of sampling at Marion Lake, so only eight Mt. Jefferson visitors responded to it.

Overnight users were somewhat more likely to say they experienced timelessness than day users (43% vs. 32%), and the difference was even greater for losing track of time (71% vs. 53%). This makes sense, as day users often said they were on a schedule or had only a brief amount of time for their visit, whereas overnight users were largely free from schedules on days in the middle of their trips.

Interestingly, visitors on low use days were moderately more likely to experience timelessness than people on either high or moderate use days (48% vs. 38% and 32%). Consistent with this finding, people on low use days were also more likely to lose track of time (72% vs. 59% and 60%).

Somatic Feelings

Only about 59% of people were asked questions about their **physical well being** (Table 22), with most of these being from Mt. Jefferson, which was by far the easiest site to reach. Few Eagle Cap visitors were asked this question, and it is likely that feelings of fatigue would have been more common overall if more Eagle Cap visitors had been queried. Of people who responded, approximately half said they felt **good**, sometimes because they were in *great shape* or had been

training. Several others noted that *it's a pretty* **easy hike**, so even though *I'm out of shape, it's not that hard.*

Table 22. Somatic Feelings

	MJW (n=53)	ALW (n=35)	ECW (n=14)	All Sites (n=102)
	----------Percent----------			
Good, fine, not bad	64.2	48.6	35.7	54.9
Difficult, tired, challenged	20.7	17.1	42.9	22.5
Easy hike	7.5	20.0	0.0	10.8
Been training, in shape	11.3	8.6	7.1	9.8

Just over 20% mentioned that hiking was a **physical challenge** either because the trail was inherently strenuous or because they were out of shape. For instance, one Mt. Jefferson visitor had done a cross country hike that she described as *pretty grueling* because it was *straight up for half a mile.* A Mt. Jefferson angler noted that, because of the amount of gear he carried, the short hike to Marion Lake was *the longest two miles I've walked in a long time.* One out of shape hiker described hiking to Marion Lake this way:

> *Our first break was an hour into it, then our next break was in a half hour and the next one in 15 minutes then we took a break every 10 minutes after that. [MJW, Day, Mod, M]*

Some people mentioned getting *blisters*, being *worn out*, or physical aches and pains like being *pretty shore in my shoulder because my pack was killing me.* One Alpine Lakes visitor joked that his knees had turned out to be *not quite as useful as they used to be.*

However, a few people mentioned *expecting to be a lot more sore than I am* or *being tired, but not horribly bad.* One Eagle Cap visitor said that the hike *was exhausting but the goal was reached and I love being here. If I was home it would bother me but up here it doesn't bother me.* An Alpine Lakes hiker observed that, although it was a *physically strenuous hike,* that was good because *it's what you came for* and *takes your mind off of work.* For people who were *just kind of strolling,* or *who packed really light,* the hike *wasn't bad at all.*

Overnight users were substantially more likely to mention feeling tired or physically challenged than day users (approximately 33% vs. approximately 10%). Additionally, though we asked relatively few Eagle Cap visitors about their somatic feelings, it appears that fatigue and physical exertion were substantially more notable among them than visitors to the other two locations.

Social Environment – Reactions to Other Visitors

Although few people mentioned the social environment in our questions about the focus of their immediate thoughts, attention, or feelings, the issue came up in most interviews at some point either as a result of other direct questions or in other contexts. In fact, just over 40% of people made some **unprompted remark** about other visitors before we questioned them directly (Table 23). Although fewer Eagle Cap visitors volunteered remarks about others, 60% of those who did made negative comments, compared to 46% of Mt. Jefferson visitors and only 35% of Alpine Lakes visitors. Conversely, approximately 57% of the people who volunteered comments at Mt.

Jefferson and Alpine Lakes were positive about the presence of or interactions with other people. It is important to note that some people volunteered both positive and negative comments about other visitors, so percentages total to over 100%.

Table 23. Unprompted Remarks about Other Visitors

	MJW	ALW	ECW	All Sites
% Making unprompted comments about other groups	51.6	40.4	32.3	41.5
Nature of response:	*-------% of People Making Unprompted Responses-------*			
Ambivalent or neutral	18.2	17.4	20.0	18.4
Negative	45.5	34.8	60.0	46.1
Positive	57.6	56.5	45.0	53.9

We expected people on high use days to volunteer comments about other visitors more often, but this was not the case (Table 24). In fact, unsolicited comments occurred slightly more often on low use days than on high use days. However, the type of comments offered were as we had predicted: on low use days 73% of people who made unprompted comments about others had positive thing to say, compared to 54% on moderate use days and 44% on high use days. Conversely, on low use days, only 27% of people making unprompted comments were negative, compared to 50% on moderate use days and 53% on high use days.

Table 24. Unprompted Remarks about Other Visitors by Level of Use on Survey Day

	Use Level		
	Low	Medium	High
% Making unprompted comments about other groups	50.0	46.2	40.9
Nature of response:	*----% of People Making Unprompted Responses----*		
Ambivalent or neutral	20.0	16.7	16.7
Negative	26.7	50.0	52.8
Positive	73.3	54.2	44.4

Depending on location, between 85% and 96% of respondents were asked explicitly about how other visitors had affected their experiences. Therefore, almost all respondents discussed other visitors or use levels at some point in the interview. Results in Table 25 combine responses to questions about the effect of others, perceptions of crowding, and any other places in the interviews where people provided assessments of social conditions on their present trip. These data show that most people evaluated some aspects of the social environment positively and others negatively. Moreover, most people also made statements in which they appeared either ambivalent or neutral about the presence of other groups. This provides an indication of the complex reactions that people have to other visitors, with such reactions rarely being one directional.

Table 25. Nature of Reactions to Other Visitors Expressed at Any Time during Interviews

	MJW (n=61)	ALW (n=56)	ECW (n=61)	All Sites (n=178)
	----------Percent----------			
Negative	57.4	50.0	60.7	56.2
Positive	73.8	78.6	65.6	72.5
Ambivalent	67.2	62.5	59.0	62.9

Negative Reactions to Other Visitors

Negative reactions had several explanations, which we sorted into several categories (Table 26). Some of these categories were as predicted from previous research, such as comments about feeling crowded, having too many encounters, or observing the inappropriate behavior of other visitors. However, our qualitative investigations identified subtleties within these categories, as well as some additional categories as explained below.

Table 26. Types of Negative Reactions to Other Visitors

	MJW (n=61)	ALW (n=56)	ECW (n=61)	All Sites (n=178)
	----------Percent----------			
Crowded, number of people	36.1	14.3	41.0	30.9
Others' behavior, type of people	26.2	17.9	26.2	23.6
Proximity	8.2	5.4	6.6	6.7
Horses	0.0	1.8	8.2	3.4
Stress, worry	9.8	0.0	0.0	3.4
Safety	3.3	1.8	3.3	2.8

Numbers indicate percentage of people who commented on other visitors at any time during the interview

The most common negative reaction was to the number of people or **crowding**. Typical responses were the following:

- *There are far too many people up here*
- *This is probably about as heavy-use as we're going to for fishing*
- *I was surprised to see how many people were here*
- *It's beautiful, pristine, [but] at this point there are too many people*
- *It seems like there's a lot of people here*
- *It's early and there's already a ton of people up here*
- *There's a zillion cars and we passed a lot of people.*

Some Eagle Cap visitors seemed overwhelmed by the number of people encountered. In the following excerpt, which is one of the most extreme examples, it was clear that the presence of others was quite important to the visitor, to the point of raising discussion within her group. This hiker seemed virtually overwhelmed by the number of people she encountered:

> *Lots of people and it was very discouraging to me, there were too many everywhere... we've been talking about it the whole time, it is very evident that something needs to be done to either limit the number of people that come in or the size of groups or something, but the*

place is being loved to death. It's really sad. It's beautiful, I can understand why all those people are up here, but something is not right. I've never been in a wilderness area that's been abused. This was the first time. I've just never seen anything as crazy before. I totally get it, it's an amazing place. Everybody was very nice and doing their own thing but somehow it's disconcerting to me... and I've just never been around this many people on our trip before. It did have an impact and it's not like I'm irritated by them being there, everybody was great and good and all that. It was just something unique in terms of my own experience...This is just truly the most densely populated area that I've been to. A lot of the places that we've been previously we see people but we're never camping anywhere near them, you never see them again. You might just pass them on the trail, but you never see them again. Where up in the Lakes Basin it was like a little Club Med up there. [ECW, Day, Hi, F]

Sometimes people qualified their responses, noting that they felt crowded only in some places, as illustrated by the Mt. Jefferson visitor who said, *the only time I felt it was crowded was yesterday...but that was just on the trail.* An Eagle Cap hiker noted that use levels vary across the wilderness, so that crowding tends to be localized:

We ran into a few people on top of Horton Pass and that was the first people we had seen so that was cool. We talked about going up and how it was, we sort of enjoyed that. Then we came down and there were more people, just huge groups of people. We ran into a group of like 8 people. We really didn't interact with them, but it is sort of negative. You think man that's a huge group. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

One parent at Alpine Lakes observed that the trip had proven to be *kind of frustrating* for the kids who wanted but weren't able to go swimming in Pete Lake: *Every place that we found that was kind of an inlet was occupied by a camp group. So that was kind of disappointing.*

Negative reactions to use centered on having people around campsites more often than encounters along the trail, as noted in prior studies.

I was surprised to see how many people were here. And that a lot of the trails go through some of the main campsites and so that you had people tromping through your campsite. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

I like to meet people on the trail. I think that's fine, but there are a lot of people here. It's fine meeting them on the trail, but I don't necessarily want to camp next to somebody who I don't know. About a quarter of a mile down the lakeshore from where I'm camping is probably okay. I don't want to hear them. I don't mind hearing them in the middle of the day, but I don't want to hear them at ten o'clock at night. [ECW, O, H, M]

Some people were affected by people who arrived before them. Either this caused anxiety about being able to find a campsite, as illustrated in the first excerpt below, or caused annoyance when people arrived to find crowded camping areas, as illustrated in the second excerpt.

We passed a lot of people going in, so it was like, oh God, we're not going to find, we were starting to think we weren't going to find a campsite. I don't like going places where we have to worry about that. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

Right when we first walked in to where there's all those campsites right there? There was a crowd there and we sort of like, hmm, we don't want to be like next to everybody – you know, camp right next to all them. There's like a bunch of little kids. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

Having campers around interfered with people's privacy, as for the Mt. Jefferson visitor who was in the toilet when *this guy almost walked in on me.* Another said *the only kind of downfall was trying to find a private place to go to the restroom that wasn't so open that there was a campsite right here where there was people.*

Interestingly, one group was affected by how other campers reacted to them:

We've just had one negative interaction. We were camped about 250 yards from somebody and they were uptight about that... It bummed me out, there were a few choice things I could have said to the person but I didn't say anything at all. I just let it pass. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

Some visitors mentioned that they felt crowded because there were more people than they had expected or desired *for such a secluded kind of off-the-beaten-path kind of place.*

Just more people than I would have hoped, being in an area that isn't near a huge population center and the fact that you do have to hike in a fair distance... Looking around from right here I can see 15 people, if I walked around and looked I could probably see 30-40 people. To me that crowded for a wilderness area that's as remote as the Eagle Cap is... I could just go to a regular campsite half an hour outside of Eugene and I would find this many people. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

The second most common type of negative reaction was based on the **behavior** of other groups. Commonly, people reported being annoyed by noisy campers or children:

Being camped near the other people did detract from our experience. We like to listen to a lot of bird sounds and things like that. And the wind in the trees. And when you have people chopping incessantly and then there were a couple of, oh, probably 10-year-old kids that were sort of running around and, and kept coming up to us and talking to us. Which, you know, they're kids, but, that's not why I come out here. I didn't want to meet any neat kids. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

People were shooting down by the lake and the horses were jumping and spooking and stuff like that. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]

Where I camped last night there was a noisy, noisy group at Glacier Lake.... I wished that they were not there, it made it not so quiet and peaceful. [ECW, Ov, Mod, F]

Beyond noise, though, it was inappropriate behavior that displayed a lack of wilderness ethics that really upset some visitors:

> *I've seen some random toilet paper, and I know why – it's hard to dig cat holes up here in the rock, it takes a little effort. That kind of aggravates me. That's probably the main thing that bothers me is just the misuse. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

> *Well, I got pretty pissed off last night. There is a group that came in, right over there, they were packed in... They were pretty noisy last night. The thing that really got me is...that a group of kids went down, right to where I take water, at the edge of the lake and they were washing their dirty dishes in the lake. So, I just yelled out – don't wash your dishes in the lake. Some nice guy that was camped out over there on that rock on the point went down and talked with them. But, I just can't stand that. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]*

Visitors' negative reactions to other groups' behavior frequently involved statements about the types of people they were or attributions about them and reasons for their behavior. If others' inappropriate behavior was judged to be the result of carelessness, laziness, or malice, it elicited especially strong negative reactions, as captured in the exasperation with which one Mt. Jefferson visitor observed that *people are carrying boats in, for God's sake.* A stock user objected to *finding a few beer cans on the trail* which he assumed were from backpackers. He said that *the backpackers should pack out their stuff that they bring in. They pack it in and bring a couple beers and then just leave them... I'll watch them do that all the time, leave stuff.*

> *Between our near-neighbors who were noisy and not particularly interested in abiding by the regulations and so forth, our camp experience was probably less than optimal ... Somebody abandoned the camp and just left the fire going... Having the fire too close to the lake, that has maybe to do with people's sense of, "gee, you know, I'm a Westerner, I'm an American, I can do whatever I want." Leaving a fire burning is, is just, it's criminal stupidity. [MJW, Ov, Mod, M]*

> *I see fires like that and people don't follow regulations and I get pretty upset about it because it's not really that difficult to do. I'm not such a gung-ho person that I follow the leave no trace principle all the time, but I try to do that. I think that leaving your trash out is something that is very rude towards other people to because if everyone did that who knows what this place would look like. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]*

Some hikers objected specifically to <u>horse</u> users. Generally this was because of the types of impacts they believed horses create, especially manure on trails and in campsites. However, other times hikers objected to the type of people they believe bring stock into the wilderness.

> *When we were starting back we walked by a camp that had all these ice chests out there. You know a horse had to carry those in. It was like, why do you need all that stuff? You are coming up here, just enjoy yourself, amazing what you don't need, just basic survival. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*

I was disappointed to see a group camped right by the lake with a couple of horses. When people do that it's a little disappointing, I assume that they are just ignorant. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

The likelihood of negative reactions to other visitors did not vary in frequency across sites, although the percentage reporting crowding as the cause of their negative reactions was substantially lower in Alpine Lakes than Mt. Jefferson or Eagle Cap. Overnight visitors were moderately more likely to say negative things about the social environment than day users (64% vs. 46%), with the difference especially pronounced for reactions to inappropriate behavior (overnight 33%, day 11%). Overnight visitors were also moderately more likely to react negatively to the overall level of use.

Differences in negative reactions to other visitors on days with different amounts of use were as predicted. On high use days 61% of people made negative comments, compared to 50% on moderate use days and 54% on low use days. The single reason that accounted for this difference had to do with crowding; on high use days 44% mentioned the number of encounters or feeling crowded, compared to 22% on moderate use days and 16% on low use days.

Rationalization and Coping with Negative Social Conditions

The way people responded to negative experiences with others varied considerably, from downplaying problematic events to packing up and moving. People who rationalized sub-optimal social conditions offered a variety of reasons. For instance, one Eagle Cap visitor said he accepted the use *because there is nothing we can do about it. The population is expanding. If you are going to get up here and get upset about other people then you're going to be disappointed.* Another deliberately worked so change the way he thought about the situation:

When we first got started we talked to a guy at the trailhead and he said there was tons of people, Boy Scouts, and it is really crowded. I immediately went into a bad mood. We hiked about a mile and a half. Normally I feel great hiking and I didn't feel good hiking up the Lostine and I never got the rhythm of my breath. Then we talked to a lady and she said what a beautiful time to be up there and blah, blah, blah and I thought, you know what, I'm going to run with that feeling. She was just so much more positive and I left my negative thoughts with the guy at the trailhead when we saw all those cars. I thought this is a place I've gone and every time I've been here it's been different and amazing and fun. Since then I've felt really good. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

Some people accepted conditions because they recognized that other people have rights to visit and *deserve to enjoy it like everybody else.*

One of the things about horses is that the wilderness areas are areas that should be made available within reason to all Americans, and even visitors to the country, and especially for all Americans, it's their park, and their wilderness areas. So if somebody wants to bring a horse in here, or if somebody wants to fly over it in an airplane, there's a lot of people who don't get to see the kind of wilderness areas that we have in the United States, and when they do finally get to see it, I think they take a little more pride in what they do have. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

I know a lot of people, this is their only chance to get out on like holidays or weekends and so they don't have an opportunity to come up at other times when it's less busy. [ALW, Ov, Mod, M]

Negative sometimes are the horses, although you're going to have to live with the horses because they deserve to be here too. [ECW, Day, Mod, M]

A few people considered alternative scenarios and judged them to be less acceptable than crowded conditions. For instance, one, Eagle Cap visitor said he wouldn't *want it to get like the Grand Canyon where you have to schedule going down the river, schedule for years ahead to be able to experience that.*

Having a feeling that one could control the situation if desired mitigated negative reactions to crowding. These people were *prepared for it*, and said they *know a few spots that are kind of out of the way* when they want to find solitude or privacy. As one Mt. Jefferson visitor said, *if you feel crowded you can just move over a little bit.*

I know how to get away from it... There are places you can spend a couple weeks and where you can never see another soul. [ECW, Day, Hi, M]

Several people mentioned changing their behavior to adjust to crowded conditions. For example, an Eagle Cap hiker said her group had had to keep going *farther and farther* to find a camp because of groups camped all along the lakeshore, and that even so there were *a couple of families close by* their own camp. She said she *won't come back because of the people.* Another Eagle Cap visitor said that even though he has been to the Lakes Basin many times, *after this I will be going to more remote places. There are too many people in the Lakes Basin area.*

We are horse packing so we've covered a lot of country. When you get back towards Mirror Lake there are a lot of people. It just depends on where you go. That's why we camp at Crescent because there aren't any people. If you know some of the old trails you can get around without seeing very many people. If you stay on the new trails you see a fair amount of people. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

Overall, 27% of people who commented on social conditions mentioned some form of cognitive coping related to use levels or crowding. The percentage doing so varied substantially across wildernesses, from a low of 14% of Alpine Lakes visitors, to 29% of Eagle Cap visitors and 34% of Mt. Jefferson visitors. More overnight visitors (32%) than day visitors (19%) did so, and people on high use days were somewhat more likely than people on low use days to rationalize social conditions (32% high use days; 21% low use days, 23% moderate use days).

Positive Reactions to Other Visitors

Approximately 73% of visitors made positive statements about the social environment or other visitors. The reasons given were largely the converse of the factors that led to negative reactions (Table 27). Specifically, people most often reacted both to the (low) amount of use and to others' behavior.

Table 27. Types of Positive Reactions to Other Visitors

	MJW (n=61)	ALW (n=56)	ECW (n=61)	All Sites (n=178)
	Percent			
Number of people; not crowded	50.8	46.4	41.0	46.1
Friendly people	21.3	26.8	18.0	21.9
Behavior of other visitors	8.2	12.6	18.0	10.1
Distance, privacy	0.0	3.6	3.3	2.2
Safety	3.3	3.6	0.0	2.2

Numbers indicate percentage of people who made any comment about other visitors during the interview.

By far the primary reason for people's positive reactions to the social environment was their perception that the **setting was not crowded**. For instance, when asked if the area felt crowded, many people said *not at all*, *absolutely not*, or *by no means*. One Mt. Jefferson visitor noted that what was *probably the biggest thing* in making the experience positive was the *lack of people*, which he noted was a contrast to the *crowded campsites* he usually visited.

> *Monday night when we camped it was just the two of us there was no one else around. We didn't have to worry about anybody coming around the corner. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *At the trailhead, there were more vehicles than I had seen before, but it's not crowded at all. I mean, it's so huge, you know? There was probably, I don't know, there's probably 30 rafts on the lake today and they're so sporadic and spread out that you don't even notice them. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

Several people noted that the experience was positive because they saw fewer people than they had expected to see.

> *I'm pretty amazed that it was so easy to get here and there's nobody here and it's 4th of July weekend. It's crazy. I thought that it would be really crowded – it's so close to Seattle too that I didn't expect it would be this secluded. [ALW, ?, Hi, ?]*

In Mt. Jefferson, this response tended to be given when people saw dozens of vehicles at the trailhead but ran into fewer people than they thought they would.

Other people expected to see a lot of people, so they weren't bothered when they did. For instance, one Eagle Cap hiker was asked if the area felt crowded and she said no, because she expected to see *one or two people every mile*. In a similar vein, several people judged the level of use as positive in comparison to what they were used to in other settings.

> *Other camping where you go, it's like in the campgrounds and there's like "pack as many people in there as they can" and here you see a couple of people and that's totally cool. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *It was awesome. Right before we left, on this trail, I said, it's just amazing how there's no crowds up here. There's no traffic up here. We used to go to Glacier every year for the last 8*

years, 7 years, and every single year, it's just wall-to-wall traffic... Up here, there's no traffic at all. There's hardly any people around. [ALW, Day, Low, M]

Some people said that they like to see some people, *just not too many*. One Alpine Lakes visitor commented, *I don't mind running into people, I just don't want to run into a ton*. When asked how other visitors affected her experience, one Eagle Cap visitor said *it's nice seeing [people] on the trail so high...It doesn't bother me at all. It's nice to have a few people, just not a bunch.*

I don't think these groups have detracted from the experience at all. I don't think running into people is a negative in any way. I wouldn't want to see it any more crowded... We've seen maybe five or six other groups on the four miles up here. I enjoy seeing people and saying hi. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]

I don't like to be completely secluded, I like it when there is about this many people, but we don't like going to regular campsites. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

Some visitors genuinely *like seeing people*. For instance, one Eagle Cap visitor who responded to a question about whether she would prefer to see no one said, *no, I like seeing people out here – I like having people around*. Sometimes this was because they enjoyed meeting new people, but often it was due to the feeling of **safety** it created. As one Alpine Lakes visitor put it, *I didn't want to be where there was not a soul for miles around ever. I'm not really prepared for it.*

Part of the reason I took this trail is because I'm hiking alone and I wanted to have people not too far away. Last year I did a hike where I didn't see anyone the whole time, I liked it but my parents don't like that. So I choose this trail for safety reason – if I get hurt someone will come by within a few hours. [ECW, Ov, Mod, F]

After lack of crowding, the second most common explanation people gave for their positive reactions to others was having **friendly** exchanges: *talking to different folks*, having people *greeting you and saying hi*, and *sharing stories about what people have heard about what's going to happen with the weather, where people have been*. People observed that they had met *some of the nicest people*, and that people are *all friendly*.

Very considerate, they stepped off the trail and I got off my horse and told them to talk because it was the packs they were carrying that upset the horses. They were very polite and talked as we went by, it was a very good experience. [ALW, Day, Low, F]

Every time you walk past someone they talk to you and say "hi" and ask you how your hike is or you ask them how the hike is up ahead. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]

The couple that was here before, the older couple, they were sitting here and we came down and we were kind of looking for a space and they said they weren't staying and we could have this spot. They left the fire going for us, which was really cool because if they wouldn't have said anything or felt comfortable approaching us then we probably wouldn't have found a spot. Then we talked to this guy over here and he had a dog and we were playing with the dog and stuff. Everyone is really friendly. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

Approximately 10% of people made positive comments about others based on their observation that other people were acting in a respectful way, with a positive environmental ethic. These types of comments are grouped as **behavior** in Table 26.

> *From what I've seen so far, I think people are using pretty good ethics in terms of camping away from lakes and putting their tents where they're partially obscured by trees and vegetation, so sure it's a heavy use area, but from what I've seen so far, I'm positive about the way people are using it. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

Most often these types of comments about behavior contained attributions about the types of people who are willing to exert the effort to go into the wilderness. Such people are judged as *more experienced and nice* or as *a different kind of people* who *enjoy nature and are very considerate and kind, friendly, interested in where you're going, where you've been.* People felt positive when they viewed others as *the same kind of people* or people who had *a similar mindset.*

> *I get the feeling that a lot of the people I've run into up here are, they appreciate how clean [it is] and they don't take it for granted, up here. They appreciate it for what it is. And I respect that a lot. I think, for the most part, you get a lot of really good people who come up here. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

> *Generally speaking it's really nice to talk to people, because they're usually pretty friendly people, not the kind you worry about walking down the street alone at night, wondering what they might do to you. There are very good people out here. [ECW, Ov, Mod, F]*

Positive reactions to other visitors occurred somewhat less frequently in Eagle Cap than Mt. Jefferson or Alpine Lakes. The strong impression from the data is that several Eagle Cap campers were surprised and sometimes dismayed at the level of use in the Lakes Basin, and this accounts for the lower frequency of positive reactions and more common negative responses to other visitors at that location. Nevertheless, two thirds of Eagle Cap visitors made positive comments about at least some of their encounters with others during their trip.

The percentage of people making positive comments about others did not differ between day and overnight visitors, and their reasons for making positive comments were similar. However, differences between people visiting on days with different levels of use were substantial. While 81% to 84% of people on low or moderate use days made positive comments, only 61% of people visiting on high use days did so. This finding is largely accounted for by comments about use levels: only about 38% of people on high use days evaluated use levels positively, compared to approximately 53% on low and moderate use days.

Neutral, Ambivalent, or Mixed Reactions to Other Visitors

Although most people made positive and negative comments about seeing other people at some point in their interview, approximately two thirds also made comments we characterized as neutral, ambivalent, or overtly mixed. Neutral responses were those where people said things like other people didn't have any effect on their experience, or they just described the situation

without really evaluating it one way or another. Several themes ran through these neutral or ambivalent responses.

First, some people simply said that the presence of others *didn't really have an impact positively or negatively.*

> *Those people that came in and moved right next to us, we talked to them for a little bit but it really didn't affect us that much. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]*

> *They haven't affected me in any way positive or negative. I would have been happy not to see them and I was happy to see them. [ALW, Day, Mod, F]*

Other people might have preferred not to see other people, but felt the impact was minimal in the larger scheme of things.

> *I really haven't seen too many but on the trail. It's fine. You know, it doesn't detract from it, seeing people on the trail. And I haven't really seen too many people go through camp... sometimes people will come through and it's not a big deal. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]*

> *I think it's been fairly neutral. The people next to us are friendly. When we first got here, they kind of pointed us to where there's some good wood stashed away. You can overhear what different people are doing. But it's been, I'd say more positive than not. [MJW, Ov, Mod, ?]*

> *There's a lot of people up here today, but... as many people as there are here, we've got the whole lake to ourselves. Like I say, I'd prefer it was less crowded, but all we've seen is people on the trail and, we just move over and let them by. I'd prefer there were fewer people. But I wouldn't say that it's negative. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

For many people, there was no impact because conditions were as expected. Knowing *we can't have it to ourselves* made seeing people *okay.*

> *I came in kind of mentally prepared for the fact that there was going to be 2-3 campsites in this area. I realize that's a good fishing spot and a good place to draw water so when I set up my camp I was aware of that and so I didn't let it bother me because it was something I was prepared for. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]*

When everyone *stays to themselves*, *keeps their distance*, and seems to *be pretty respectful*, people can feel *left alone* and *pretty isolated.* This was a key factor that kept many people from being bothered by other visitors.

> *I can't even hardly see those camps over there. This one's kind of close, but they're harmless. They came in today and they haven't done anything. Just doing their thing. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]*

> *[Other campers] haven't affected it too much... They kept to themselves and we kept to ourselves. We haven't really interacted with them. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]*

We could see the one guy camped right over there. He actually came over to borrow some matches because he forgot. I've seen a couple people walking by to go down to the lake to get some water or whatever. It's not like you're at a campground where you're hearing music and people are screaming and stuff. As long as I don't really see them or hear them. I know they are there, but it's not bad. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]

Several people mentioned both positive and negative encounters in the same breath.

As I say, there was some tension and disagreements with [a group that] seemed to be building fires larger than what's appropriate, or seemed to be less careful in terms of trash and other things. And looking out on the lake and seeing people in their inflatable things is less than the natural ideal that I hold. But, other people were kind and nice and pointed us to a trail that we hadn't thought about going to and offered us some extra food and, so, it was a mixture. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]

The people with the horses just kind of, we didn't really meet them, although their dog did come trucking into the end of the camp. To them it is just a family pet, but to me, I don't know that... That would be the only thing that I would call negative experience with people, but there was a family with two young boys that we really enjoyed talking to and exchanging ideas about what it's like to be out with your kids and how far can your kids go and how did you prepare them for that. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]

Solitude

Most visitors were asked explicitly if they had experienced a feeling of solitude on their trip, and often the question asked specifically about the time immediately prior to the interview. As solitude was not a central focus of our study, we did not probe deeply, so many people (n=42, 35%) provided simple yes or no replies with little elaboration. Nevertheless, enough people described their sense of solitude and the factors that contributed to or detracted from it for us to gain insight into the phenomenon of solitude.

Among the 43 people who said they unequivocally experienced solitude (Table 28), 16 offered explanations, and these were quite varied. Two mentioned camping alone and four said they had only seen a few people. Others cited the quiet, their ability to relax, and aspects of the natural environment like *watching the sun* or *watching the fog come up off Eagle Cap* or *up off the valley*.

Table 28. Experience of Solitude

	MJW (n=41)	ALW (n=41)	ECW (n=37)	All Sites (n=119)
	----------*Percent*----------			
Full solitude, no qualifications	43.9	36.6	27.0	36.1
Temporary, at times	22.0	26.8	43.2	30.3
Partial solitude	17.1	24.4	2.7	15.1
No solitude	17.1	14.6	27.0	19.3

Numbers indicate the percentage of people who were asked about solitude.

Nearly one third of respondents said they had definitely experienced solitude, but only at times during their trip, and sometimes these were very brief moments. These are indicated as "**temporary**" in Table 28. Examples of such events follow.

> *A little bit, yes. Yes. The sun was out and I walked out into the sun. Just kind of stood there, couldn't see anybody. It was pretty. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]*

> *Briefly, the kids were up reading stuff so I came down and laid down in the meadow here. Feeling a little bit guilty about laying down in the meadow, enjoying the wildflowers. It's nice, no human sound. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*

Nearby campers interfered with people's ability to have solitude all the time. For example, one Mt. Jefferson visitor said she experienced solitude at the start of her trip *until the next day when people showed up* and camped *10, 20 yards away*. A very similar event was described by an Alpine Lakes camper who said, *basically the whole day yesterday we pretty much had solitude until these people moved in next door and they're very loud*. When others camped nearby, solitude might only occur at times, like during the morning when it is *nice and quiet.*

Similarly, some days during the trip were marked by a much greater sense of solitude than other days:

> *Definitely more yesterday than today. I guess overall yesterday was more alone. Today climbing up to Eagle Cap and coming back down until we got here, then I was a lot more aware of the people around us. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]*

> *I guess for a while when we crossed Polaris Pass, which takes about a day to get across there. We were pretty much alone there. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*

For many visitors, traveling with a group meant that solitude was rare, but times *hiking by myself*, separated from other group members, afforded brief moments or *just a little bit* of solitude, as did times at camp when others weren't present.

> *Yeah. In fact, I just sat down to rest and she took off down the road a little ways and I just sat there and thought to myself – it's funny you asked me that – I was sitting there thinking, I am completely alone out here. And it was cool. And all I could hear was the wind through the trees and nothing else. [ALW, Day, Low, M]*

> *Actually, I experienced a pretty good sense of solitude back at our camp this morning. I went off by myself swimming... I've been hooked up with somebody pretty much the whole time, so I haven't really felt a big sense of solitude. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *Not that it's total solitude, I'm with a group of five. There are instances when you're on the trail by yourself and there's no one else around. It's nice you can get in touch with the sights, the sounds, and the smells. Just letting my mind go to a blank slate, letting it take in the different elements... Some nice times, I've broken away to go and sit by myself and just relax. [ECW, Ov, Low, M]*

While some people described episodes of solitude during their trip, other people addressed the question of solitude by saying that they had had only a **partial sense of solitude** overall. For these people, either the number of encounters with other groups or interactions with their own group were not so extensive as to totally preclude any feeling of solitude, but the sense was never complete.

> *Well, yeah, solitude in the sense that I'm over at my campsite by myself and I haven't had anybody disturb me or whatnot but [I] haven't had that solitude that I've had in places where it's been just me up there in the woods. Which is different. Knowing that I could hike along this trail here and not bump into anybody gives you kind of a different feeling than knowing that you can run into somebody around every corner. [ALW, Ov, Mod, M]*

> *It's not necessarily like solitude, because I'm with a friend or with a family or whatever.... Well, we saw people all the time. So it wasn't like we were physically isolated. But... the way you act makes you feel isolated. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]*

> *I guess you could say somewhat. I suppose if you were up here on a, say a Monday through a Wednesday, would be more optimum for that. Because there is a camp here and there is one over here on the point ...and there's guys that always drop off the mountain. There's other people that pass through. And especially since we're not far off the trail, with some people passing through. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]*

> *Almost. Solitude, for me, really requires complete absence of other persons. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

A few of these people said they felt solitude compared to other places, although their words implied that the sense was not complete.

> *Well, it's a lot more solitude here than the city, that's for sure. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *Not this trail, a little bit, not much. [But] it is a lot more peaceful than on top of Mt. Howard where everybody takes the tram up and walks a little nature trail. [ECW, Day, Hi, F]*

> *Yes, there's beautiful glimpses of solitude but I... don't get too enveloped in that feeling because...I know at any given moment on this particular trail, there could be 12 horses come through and... totally disrupt what I was just feeling. So, it's almost like, I'm always on guard on a spiritual level, to not be too disappointed. So rather than just allow yourself to fall into the atmosphere... I'm always, I guess, on guard for the disruption. Especially on a popular trail like this. So it's more of a pleasant, rather than a deep feeling of solace and peace that comes that comes with what I would describe as real solitude. [ALW, Day, Low, M]*

Finally, approximately 19% of visitors said they definitely **did not experience solitude**, and about half of these provided explanations. While seeing *a lot of people* and *having people camped all around* were common explanations, nearly as many said being with others in their

group meant that they did not experience solitude, for example because they were *talking the whole way.*

> *I'm always aware of [other people]. Nature calls and you are always worrying about who's around the corner. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*
>
> *Well, just because I'm with a group, it's kind of impossible. There's a contradiction in terms there. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*
>
> *I guess being up here with a group is more of an outdoor experience, but it's not solitude. Solitude would be on my own ...No. I've been too busy, kids and stuff, you're always around people. Solitude's something you do more as an individual to reflect, and that's not what this is about. It's about helping my son, getting him to have some fun and enjoy backpacking and getting out and seeing the beauty of nature. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*

The percentage of people who felt an unqualified sense of solitude varied moderately across study locations, from a low of 27% in Eagle Cap to a high of 44% in Mt. Jefferson. Differences across sites in the percentage of people who did not experience solitude at all were less extreme, but mirrored the same pattern, from 14% in Alpine Lakes to 27% in Eagle Cap. These findings are surprising because Mt. Jefferson was overrepresented in the sample of high use days. However, the difference may be due to the greater representation of overnight visitors in the Eagle Cap sample; day users were substantially more likely to say they had an unequivocal sense of solitude (49%) than overnight visitors (29%), and overnight visitors were substantially more likely to have temporary episodes of solitude than day users (39% vs. 16%). Despite these findings, day and overnight visitors were equally likely to say they did not experience solitude at all.

Interestingly, reports of solitude were less likely to vary with use level than with site or trip length. Equal percentages (33-39%) said they definitely had solitude on low, moderate, and high use days, and the percentage who had temporary episodes did not differ either. However, on moderate and high use days, people were somewhat more likely to say they did not experience solitude at all (26% and 21%) than on low use days (8%).

Comparisons of Social Conditions to Other Times and Places

A prevalent tendency emerged when we asked people if they felt crowded or experienced solitude: many people's responses involved comparisons to other places or times. Of 178 people who discussed social conditions, 27% made such a comparison (Table 29). Most of these compared the present site to another area, typically other wildernesses or backcountry trails.

Table 29. Number of Participants Comparing Social Conditions to Other Times or Places

Compare This Trip To:			
	Other Area (n=40)		Other Time (n=14)
Other Wilderness	22	More crowded now than in the past	10
Other trails	5	Less crowded than in the past	4
Developed site	7	More crowded because of time of year	3
City	10	Less crowded because of time of year	4

Interestingly, nearly equal numbers said their current trip felt more crowded than other places (n=22) as said it felt less crowded (n=17). People who felt less crowded sometimes compared the current visit to busy wilderness areas, such as Mt. Hood or places in southern California:

> *Well, I grew up in southern California and backpacked with Boy Scouts. We went to areas that were filled or more populated sometimes. So this is the first time I've been in the Oregon area, since I've moved to Idaho, that I've seen this many people in a wilderness. It doesn't bother me too much, I've seen worse. [ECW, Ov, Mod, F]*

> *I'm comparing it to my experience last summer in the South Sister area and they had about 15 sites where we were camping. They were probably all within eyesight and I thought that was way too crowded. That definitely pushed my limit. [ECW, Ov, Low, F]*

> *I thought it would be more crowded. There's no one up here, so that's why I like it the most. I'm used to California, the San Bernardino Wilderness. It's a lot more crowded. [ALW, Day, Mod, M]*

> *Most of the stuff up on Mount Hood where you get to is accessible by car. You've got people driving up, and it tends to be a lot more people. And I like to just get away from all that. It's a lot more secluded out here. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]*

> *I like the fact that even though there are more people here than I hoped it is still less people than I would see in the Northern Cascades. There is less competition with people. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]*

On the other hand, other people said that their current trip was *a little more crowded than other trails* or that it felt *more crowded than most wildernesses*.

> *Marion Lake is almost kind of, turned into sort of like a drive in camp scene sometimes, you get people packing coolers in here somehow. It kind of blows your mind, but it happens. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]*

However, others pointed out that it felt less crowded than National Parks like Yosemite or Glacier or developed campgrounds.

> *I've done quite a bit of car camping and it doesn't compare at all to coming up here. I mean, car camping is nice and you can bring all your luxuries with you. But, it's just so, it's so Wilderness here. When you're car camping, there's all the vehicles and lots of people and stuff and here it's just, you come up and enjoy the Wilderness. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]*

> *Oh, this place is great. I like this place particularly because it doesn't have all the foot traffic and stuff that, like, if you go to Silver Creek Falls Park, like a day like today, it would just be packed with people, elbow to elbow. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*

Some also noted that, compared to city life, the wilderness felt hardly crowded at all and offered excellent solitude:

> *Where I'm from there is no quiet. New York City, 24 hours a day there is some noise going on. All you heard yesterday was the wind, no trees, not birds, not anything, just the wind. And it was really, really nice. [ECW, Ov, Low, F]*

> *I: And would you say that this area feels crowded?*
> *R: Relative to what? Relative to Beaverton, or what? Relative to where we work and live? No. Relative to some of the other wilderness areas we go into? Sure. [MJW, Ov, Mod, M]*

Fewer people compared the social setting or current trip to past trips, but most of those who did said it was more crowded now than in the past.

> *Actually, I'm a little bit concerned, I grew up here and it used to be that you would go out and on a hike and maybe see two or three other people in a week. Of course I'm 55 so that was a long time ago, now it's where you see a couple groups every few minutes. I am concerned about the growth and about the potential for overuse and the loss of some of the wilderness area that we have. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]*

> *There was just two people, backpackers, nice and quiet, but still that is crowded to me. I'd like to be where I don't see any tents. And that is the way it used to be when I came here. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]*

> *When I used to come here with my mom, we wouldn't even see anybody. Nobody came, except for just the old cowboys. It was mostly people who rode horses. And it wasn't really discovered as a hiking area like it is now. [ALW, Day, Hi, F]*

Only a few people said the current trip felt less crowded than in the past. One Eagle Cap visitor observed, *I came in here the first time in '52, I took a lot of trips in the '60s, and it doesn't seem as crowded to me now as it did then. I remember large numbers of Boy Scout troops coming through, large numbers of pack trains coming through, and we have none of those now.*

A few people explained that the site was crowded or not crowded due to the time of year.

We were talking about, reminiscing... five or six years ago, we had the lake, Marion Lake, to ourselves. We came up in May. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]

Social Environment – Effect of One's Own Group

Most visitors were asked how being with their group affected their experience, and the overwhelming majority responded that the effect was positive (Table 30).

Table 30. Effect of Own Group on Visitors' Experiences

	MJW (n=50)	ALW (n=53)	ECW (n=38)	All Sites (n=141)
	----------Percent----------			
Positive	94.0	81.1	76.3	84.4
Negative	0.0	3.8	5.3	2.8
Neutral	6.0	15.1	18.4	12.8

The most common explanation of positive feelings was enjoyment of the *camaraderie, good company*, and *hanging out with friends* who are *fun to be with* and *who get along really well* (Table 31). In a similar vein, many people mentioned that their experience was better with companions than it would have been without them. For example, when asked if she would rather be alone, one Alpine Lakes visitor replied that she would *rather go with friends* because *it just makes it a better trip.*

Table 31. Positive Effects of Own Group on Visitors' Experiences

	MJW (n=47)	ALW (n=43)	ECW (n=29)	All Sites (n=119)
	----------Percent----------			
Camaraderie, conversation, fun	44.7	30.2	48.3	40.3
Better with others than alone	23.4	30.2	6.9	21.8
Special quality of interaction	17.0	9.3	31.0	17.6
Sharing experience together	14.9	25.6	6.9	16.8
Being with similar people	4.3	25.6	24.1	16.8
Support, collective effort	6.4	20.9	20.7	15.1
Kids	23.4	4.7	13.8	14.3
Old friends	14.9	7.0	13.8	11.8
Solo differs from being with people	12.8	14.0	6.9	11.8
Catching up with friends	6.4	9.3	3.4	6.7
Would not go alone	8.5	2.3	0.0	4.2

It wouldn't be the same without him, I wouldn't like it. Well I would and I would do it and I have done it, but it's just more fun. I don't know how to explain that. It's nice to have the companionship, it's nice to have the company, it's nice to plan the day. It's nice to have something in common and a goal to work towards. [ALW, Day, Low, F]

If I did this hike on my own it would fulfill me, but this has been a wonderful family experience. [ALW, Day, Mod, M]

Some people explicitly compared trips they had taken alone to their present trip with companions. A few of these remarked on how the nature of the experience differed.

Sometimes I come in alone. I come in when I want to do some real hard-core fishing early in the year and the weather's not real good, I mean, I'll just hike in by myself – that's okay too. But John and I have been friends since we've been about six years old. We've been through a lot of different experiences and stuff, so, him and I usually try to come up here at least once a year, about this time of year. We don't see each other as much as we used to, so we really cherish it when we do get together and share something like this together. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]

I've camped up here for probably 10 days straight by myself, several times, and I feel solitude when I camp alone. But this particular trip isn't about that. It's about friendship. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]

I was hiking up by myself a couple of weeks ago and that was a more tranquil experience – this was a more social experience, but a more engaging and playful experience... So it made it less connecting to nature and more hanging out with friends. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]

Just depends on the day. I hike alone quite a bit, just because it gives me time to think without interruption. It's also nice when you go with a friend. [ALW, Day, Mod, M]

However, most of these people said that they preferred to be with their friends or family than to be alone:

I've been out here plenty of times and it's not as much fun coming out here by myself. You want to share your experience with your kids and other people. [MJW, Day, Low, M]

I've only come once or twice in the last twenty years by myself and it's definitely a lot more fun to have somebody to share the experience with. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]

I guess it kind of enriches the experience a little bit to go out with friends. When I was in Seattle, I'd go out by myself a few times. And that was great too. But it's nice to hook up with friends that you haven't seen for a while and you don't see on a daily basis. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]

Being able to share the wildflowers, being able to share the whole experience, adds to it... I've gone out solo, you see things and you want to tell somebody about it, you want to share it with somebody. It's nice to have somebody with you. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]

Many people described how traveling in wilderness gave them an opportunity to catch up with old friends in a less hectic environment, and many cherished the opportunity to *experience this together.*

We do a couple of trips every year for the past ten years I'd bet. So it's a good close group. We like to get out and do things together so it's been—added that social element to it. [ECW, Ov, Mod, F]

It's awesome, because we are so close... She just got up here a few days ago and I just couldn't wait to get up here, because we share so much of the same stuff. She lives so far away and we get back together and it's like we haven't been apart. It's very nice. [ALW, Day, Mod, F]

This is a good time for me to come up and spend time with my friends... One of my closest friends is coming up here behind me. I really haven't had a lot of time to spend with him just because I've been working so much and life has been hectic and I feel that relationship has been a little neglected. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]

The positive types of group dynamics frequently had to do with being with similar types of people who share interests and the *same ideas and goals*. People enjoyed knowing that others got *the same fulfillment* from the trip as they did. This comfort and ease has developed from *knowing each other for a really long time* or having *done a lot of trips together*. As one Eagle Cap visitor put it, being with *the group enhances it... We all enjoy coming out and being in this kind of environment backpacking and stuff. Being with people who enjoy the same things you do just kind of enhances your experience*.

Many people, especially those traveling with family or significant others, commented on the *quality time* they could have with others in the wilderness environment. Getting away allows people *to sit down and talk*, have a chance to *talk about [their] goals*, and experience the *bonding that goes on with challenge*. Some parents, in particular, liked getting their children away from distractions of the city:

They help me recognize that it's important to take the time to bring them up. Take time to get in shape. Just be able to share the opportunity as they're growing up. Have a good time. Good, clean fun that you don't have to worry about a lot of things. [MJW, Ov, Mod, M]

I think it's the family time that we have. One-on-one with my daughter, me and my husband, my husband and her, and all three of us together. It's just a really good bonding time, where all the influences are removed and we have time to pause and do simple things like play cards together. It just really seems like a renewal for us, because we have a very busy in our normal life, with school, sports, social life, stuff like that. We don't have those influences out here, we just enjoy the beauty and each other. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]

Some people, especially those with less experience in wilderness, appreciated the support and help provided by other more experienced group members. Having friends around *keeps each other going*. One Alpine Lakes visitor said her friends had been *just precious, very supportive and have definitely picked up the pieces*. People *who have done this a dozen times* know *some tricks that make it a lot easier for everybody and are willing to really work hard*. An Eagle Cap visitor described her companions *as an excellent group to be with* because they were willing to

teach. She was *glad [to be] with them* on her first trip because they were *understanding of [her] inexperience.*

One equestrian in Alpine Lakes described how the group supported one of their friends who had had *a very serious riding accident where she broke her pelvis bone* on the trail to Pete Lake:

> *It took her a long time to have the courage to come back and ride here. And my mom was the one that was instrumental in kind of buddying up with her and showing her how to do that again. And so, for her, this is a very exceptional thing, to be able to have the courage to get back on a horse and then feel comfortable about coming here, in particular. [ALW, Day, Hi, F]*

The few negative comments about people's own group stand out as stark exceptions to the overall positive tone of most comments. One Alpine Lakes visitor, a young woman, described conflict with her *rude brother*, and three people thought they probably would have had a better trip if they had been alone.

Interestingly, although people's reaction to their own group was largely positive, this did differ to a moderate extent across wildernesses, with people in Alpine Lakes and Eagle Cap more likely to be neutral and less likely to be positive than Mt. Jefferson visitors. The explanations for positive evaluations differed moderately to substantially as well. Alpine Lakes visitors were moderately less likely to mention camaraderie than visitors to either of the other wildernesses, and substantially less likely than Eagle Cap visitors to mention the special quality of interactions. Mt. Jefferson visitors were substantially less likely to describe being with similar people and support and collective efforts than Alpine Lakes or Eagle Cap visitors, but they were substantially more likely to mention children.

Day and overnight visitors were equally likely to say their own group had a positive effect on their experience, and there were few meaningful differences in the explanations they offered. Overnight users were moderately more likely to mention camaraderie (42% vs. 31%). Similarly, people visiting on days with different levels of use were all highly positive about their own group. There were only a few differences in explanations: 1) people on high use days were moderately less likely (10%) to mention sharing an experience than people on low (21%) and moderate (27%) days; 2) people on high use days were more likely (45%) to value sharing stories and camaraderie than people on moderate use days (35%) or low use days (27%); 3) people on low use days were moderately more likely (21%) to mention group support and assistance than people on moderate (11%) and high (10%) use days. Overall, few important differences emerged among the different comparative strata.

Key Influences on Experience Quality

After asking about people's focus of attention, thoughts, feelings, and social interactions, we asked questions about the things that were central to their experiences. Often the question was phrased, "what has been key to your experience out here?" While we intended this question to be broad, encompassing both positive and negative things, most people only answered with positive factors. Whether this was because they had not had any negative experiences so bad as to rank as "key" is unknown. We also generally asked directly about the positive factors, such as "what

makes you want to be here?" It was much less common for us to ask specifically about negative influences.

Negative Influences

Of people asked about key influences, approximately 60% mentioned at least one negative factor, although this differed considerably across study locations. Eagle Cap visitors were least likely to describe negative influences, while Alpine Lakes visitors were most likely. These differences are probably due to the way questions were asked; 53% of Alpine Lakes visitors were asked specifically about negative factors, compared to only 38% of Mt. Jefferson visitors and 31% of Eagle Cap visitors. Therefore, in Table 32, percentages reflect only people who described negative influences

Table 32. Negative Influences on Trip Experience

	MJW (n=36)	ALW (n=37)	ECW (n=25)	All Sites (n=98)
	Percent of People Who Described Negative Experiences			
Crowds, behavior	38.9	8.1	36.0	26.5
Weather	25.0	24.3	8.0	20.4
Bugs	8.3	43.2	0.0	19.4
Fatigue, feet	8.3	32.4	12.0	18.4
Snow on trail	30.6	0.0	0.0	11.2
Nothing	11.1	8.1	4.0	8.2
Creek crossings	0.0	16.2	0.0	6.1
Horses	0.0	5.4	16.0	6.1
Litter	2.8	2.7	16.0	6.1
Ecological impacts	11.1	0.0	4.0	5.1
Illegal behavior	2.8	2.7	12.0	5.1
Regulations, fees	5.6	2.7	4.0	4.1
Planes	2.8	0.0	12.0	4.1

Four factors emerged as most negative, although the likelihood of each being mentioned varied moderately to substantially across wildernesses. About one quarter of respondents mentioned crowding or rude behavior, though this was substantially less common in Alpine Lakes than Eagle Cap or Mt. Jefferson.

> *The crowd was a bit much. Just hearing a lot of other people poking around and being loud. And the mosquitoes were distractive. Cut back on the relaxing, but, other than that, it was very nice. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]*

Weather was substantially more likely to be a problem in Mt. Jefferson (rain and snow) and Alpine Lakes (heat or rain) than Eagle Cap.

> *Yesterday we didn't get up until pretty late because it was kind of drizzling outside, so we just stayed in the tent and so the weather was kind of a factor. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]*

I think the only negative thing would be just the feeling that it may pour on us again. I'd rather enjoy the trip without the rain. But that's nothing you can control, so you just kind of have to be ready for it if it happens. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]

Mosquitoes were notably a problem at Alpine Lakes, and it was common for people there to say things like, *I haven't really felt negative about anything other than the mosquitoes*. Alpine Lakes visitors also tended to report fatigue, tired feet, or other physical problems the most often.

On the negative side I would say it's been two years since I've worn my boots and I've had a child since then and my feet have gotten a little bit bigger. So my boots don't fit very well anymore, and my feet hurt. I would say that's the only negative to this whole thing so far. [ALW, Ov, H, F]

Other negative influences tended to be much less common and also unique to individual wildernesses. For example, crossing creeks at high water made some people *a little bit nervous* in Alpine Lakes, and losing the trail in the snow or falling through snow drifts was a problem only for Mt. Jefferson visitors.

A few people mentioned being bothered by airplanes, horses, regulations, litter, campsite impacts, or evidence of illegal behavior such as campfires, as exemplified in the following excerpts.

[Planes were] a moment of annoyance. It hasn't blown the experience or ruined my day or anything. It was just kind of surprising to hear that many airplanes. One would be okay, but there were three or four of them this morning. [ECW, Day, Mod, M]

One of my complaints, we got to the lake last night and a couple of really nice campsites had good deposits of horse shit in them. You would think the horsemen would be a little bit more considerate to keep the horses out of the campsites. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

In one area we were told we couldn't have a fire. We were almost a quarter of a mile away from the lake. We were far enough away that we couldn't see it, but we couldn't have a campfire. It seemed a little obsessive. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

There is one thing that did disappoint me at our very first campsite... You knew the people had been drinking and not taking care of the campsite. So we picked it up and bagged it. Because our packs were so full we left the bag on the side of the trail and hope somebody will pick it up coming on down. [ECW Ov, Mod, F]

It's just sad to see such an old tree getting stabbed by some little, drunk little idiot, you know? That's disturbing for me. [MJW, Ov, Low, M]

The only objection I have to a small camp like that full of that many people, is the vegetation that was there – there used to be grass down there by the lake – is all gone and trampled on from the 20 people that were there. You know, they wrecked the habitat...They also had a

campfire about 20 feet from the lake. Burning huge logs, maybe a foot in diameter and 3-5 feet long. [MJW, Ov, Mod, M]

We see camp fires everywhere... like right here in this area I have already dismantled one. There is another one up there and there are signs of three or four others all in this fifty square feet. It distracts from the beauty. Just seeing all these black spots when there's no reason for a fire up here. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]

Often people downplayed negatives, saying, for example, that mud on the trail *wasn't like a huge deal.* The following examples illustrate this tendency.

- *The warmth, but that's, I don't even call it negative really.*
- *Just the heat and the bugs, it's a little hotter than I thought it would be, but not so hot that I can't deal with it.*
- *If anything the wetness last night maybe, but you can survive that.*
- *Negatives are the amount of people you run into. You kind of come up here to get away from people... And I don't mind, like I knew there was going to be lots of people up here on this trip. I don't mind so much.*

Approximately 8% of all study participants said there had been no negatives at all:

- *No negative, never any negative being out here.*
- *I don't know how you could be negative here.*
- *I can't think of any major negatives.*
- *I can't think of a thing that is negative, I can't think of a single thing. Even the obstacles are positive because getting across the creek without getting wet and finding a log to cross on, it just makes the hike, the experience that much more.*

The frequency of particular negative influences varied considerably across wildernesses. Alpine Lakes visitors were substantially less likely to mention other visitors, but substantially more likely to mention bugs and fatigue and moderately more likely to mention the creek crossings. Eagle Cap visitors were moderately less likely to mention the weather, but more likely to mention horses, litter, and planes. Overnight visitors were moderately more likely to mention crowding than day users (31% vs. 12%), and people on low use days were substantially less likely to refer to other visitors (5% vs. 33% of people on moderate use days and 30% of those on high use days). People on low use days were also moderately more likely to mention weather and bugs than people on days with moderate to high levels of use.

Positive Influences on Trip Experience

Not surprisingly, nearly everyone mentioned some positive influence on their experience (Table 33). In part this may have been due to our emphasis on positive factors in questioning, but it also reflects how generally positive people feel about their wilderness experiences. Whereas most people only mentioned one or two negative factors, most people mentioned many positive influences on their experience. Nearly all positive influences were things that people had already described in the course of the interview, so we provide only a limited number of examples here.

Table 33. Positive Influences on Trip Experience

	MJW (n=62)	ALW (n=53)	ECW (n=47)	All Sites (n=162)
	Percent of people who described positive influences			
Views/scenic/natural feature	46.8	67.9	76.6	62.3
Natural, remote, pristine	27.4	17.0	19.1	21.6
Variety	3.2	5.7	14.9	7.4
Smells, sounds	9.7	15.1	10.6	11.7
Escape, peace & quiet	40.3	50.9	21.3	38.3
Solitude, few people	29.0	32.1	14.9	25.9
Weather	27.4	35.8	12.8	25.9
Social ties, group	29.0	28.3	14.9	24.7
Activity	38.7	13.2	12.8	22.8
Wildlife	25.8	7.5	10.6	15.4
Easy access	8.1	3.8	4.3	5.6

Aspects of the **natural environment** were by far the most common positive influences, mentioned by two thirds of all visitors.

> *I guess just the overall experience of immersing yourself in nature. This is total immersion, for me. The wind, the sky, you know, just everything. The mountains, the snow, water, it's like, (pause) it's all right. [MJW, Day, Low, M]*

> *When you get back in there far enough the granite outcropping and the hanging meadows. That was really cool, I really like that. Passing some of those meadows... The trail right through the pine trees. It's really cool for me. The stream is neat too. Just taking a trail through the pine trees and having the needles scattered on the trail and the awesome views of the cliffs and the mountains sides with the granite. [ECW, Day, Mod, F]*

> *The topography, number one. In a lot of other areas in the state, [there's] one solitary volcano or something like that. This is something more similar to the North Cascades, or if you go over to Montana or something like that, where the topography is not just one mountain, but successive ranges and drainages, and you turn a corner and something else is new. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*

> *I love the granite and the terrain, it's got great terrain. Nice lake benches, the topography is interesting. I like the variety of climax zones, compared to meadows coming up the river valley. That in particular is nice in this area. And it's more open than the Cascades that we usually travel. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]*

Three dominant sub-themes emerged as people described the natural environment. One aspect of that came through in many interviews was the *untouched, pristine* nature of the environment that gave it a *real wilderness* feeling. Beyond scenic beauty, the lack of visible human influence and the ability to imagine these environments evolving through time contributed especially strongly to the quality of experiences.

It's still unspoiled. It feels untouched by man... You feel like you're visiting nature in its basic sense. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]

It has pristine things that are hard to find anymore in the wilderness areas. I think the wilderness areas that are accessible to us, on horses, like I said, don't often have the combination of virgin forest as well as a lot of lakes and streams, as well as snow-capped mountains. [ALW, Day, Hi, F]

Seeing the trees and being able to see the lakes that are up in the elevations because of the ice melt, you don't see that down lower levels, they're mostly reservoirs or whatnot... This is, feeding off of the snow melt – Pete Lake is not dammed, it's actually there, it's created by nature. So that's what makes it enjoyable, to me. [ALW, Day, Mod, M]

I'd say silence and just the raw element of view and the inhabitants. You don't really have any control. [MJW, Ov, Low, F]

Smells and sounds, which emerged as important elements under the focus of attention, also proved to be key positive influences for some respondents.

I like the river, the sounds, the smells, the large trees, just the whole thing. [ALW, Day, Low, M]

It's so funny, people always say stop and smell this – I literally like to stop and smell. I love the smells out here! Some of these trees are unbelievable. [ALW, Day, Low, M]

The colors, and just things that are growing around are pretty amazing. The colors, the smells the sounds, just the total experience. If you could bottle the smell somehow. The whole sensory experience is just nice. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]

The smells, the sounds, the fresh air, just being out to see nature in its purest form....A thousand different colors of green. It's just kind of magical. [ALW, Ov, Hi, M]

The fresh air, that you get up here. I smelled the air yesterday. I said "Tom, smell the air!" It was wonderful. It's really a clean air feeling. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]

The third sub-theme of natural environment was variety. As noted under focus of attention, variety in scenery was important to many visitors. The following excerpts demonstrate that the importance of the environment goes beyond simply scenic beauty.

One of things that I think makes this place unique is that you get a little more diversity as opposed to just a forest. These mountains seem a little more rugged, there are rocks and trees. There is just a lot more colors that you see when you're here.... This place specifically seems to like sparkle to me. It just has this sparkle and glow to it that is here that is not necessarily in other places. I don't know if it is because it is higher or there is more granite but it just sparkles. [ECW, Ov, Hi, F]

I like the time of year...with all the trees and the nurse logs, there's just all kinds of things happening in the forest so there's lots of different birds ... with the talus slope and the sloping mountainous area then you've got lots of neat scrub, the maple and the alder and all the things that seem to do really well up here. Like incense cedar, which you don't really see very often, and the hemlock... And I have to mention the bear grass. I've never seen so much bear grass. I'm totally amazed. [MJW, OV, Low, F]

Several different factors were commonly mentioned as positive influences after the natural environment. Feelings of **escape, peace and quiet**, or mental refreshment were key for nearly 40% of people, although this varied substantially across wildernesses. As one Alpine Lakes visitor said, *it gives you totally new life being out here. It regenerates you, your being, because you are it, you are what's around you... You drop the other world totally, the working world. It's gone.*

It's wonderful, this is the real world. Getting away from the hustle and bustle of city life. You just get a chance to relax and be alone with yourself. [ALW, Ov, Mod, M]

Stronger emotions like awe (n=3), inspiration (n=4), humility (n=4), and excitement (n=5) were less common. Although only a small number of people mentioned a connection to God, for these people, this experience was profound.

About one quarter of study participants mentioned **solitude** or the lack of people as a key positive influence:

I think the reason we backpack is fundamentally to get away from the noise of people and cars and roads and campsites and that kind of stuff. So, just the solitude, really. Just the beautiful scenery and solitude. [ALW, Ov, Low, M]

The fact that there's no one else around. You really do feel that you're in the wilderness and you could shout and no one would hear you. I mean, you're beyond civilization, it really felt like that. Which is wonderful. And just two hours from Portland, you know, it's very good, definitely the feeling of you're in nature's territory. [MJW, Ov, Hi, M]

Weather, namely **good weather**, was a key positive influence for 26% of study participants.

The weather is so beautiful. It was just great this morning. So, the weather has been great. I mean, who wouldn't be in a good mood on a sunshiny day like this? [MJW, Ov, Low, F]

We just went on a long hike and you know it was like a really long – we walked all around... And, uh, when we got back, the sun came out and we were just sitting there just totally – it was that feeling that, we just did this and we get a little reward by the sun coming out and it's just really great. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

People often mentioned that their **own group** was a key positive influence on experience, for example being with *a great group* or having been able to *share a quality experience*. This stands in stark contrast to the very few people who mentioned their group as a negative influence.

People traveling with children tended to reiterate the value of passing on traditions and developing bonds. One Eagle Cap visitor mused that *it is just something learned from childhood. Just doing it from childhood with your parents and you learn from that experience and you want to share it with your children.* An Alpine Lakes Hiker described a sense of

> *personal satisfaction that we've done as much of this with my daughter as we have. She's been backpacking since she was six months old. As I see her grow, and how adapt she is to the environment. We were taking about how she started out on the hike with my husband and half way up she changed her mind. We had two-way radios, and she decided that she wanted to walk back by herself, that's the first time she's ever done that where she walked in the woods for a mile or so by herself. At first I was really nervous about it, but she did just fine, and why wouldn't she, she's done this her whole life. It's second nature to her. I just feel kind of gratified. [ALW, Ov, Low, F]*

The **activity** itself was a key positive influence for many visitors, although this varied across wildernesses. Activities were discussed earlier in this report, and no important new insights emerged when the topic arose under discussions of key influences on experience quality.

Given that not everyone saw wildlife, the prevalence of **wildlife** as a positive influence is notable. Sometimes these experiences were intense, as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

> *We sat in a marsh for about an hour yesterday watching these little tiny baby water birds, I don't know what they're called – some people call them dippers. I had almost stepped on them the other day taking wildflower pictures. There was this little tiny nest and there were three maybe four fluff balls and a speckled egg. They were just cute. That was Thursday night, and the next morning they were all gone, even the one that was an egg had hatched and was out of the nest. They were sitting along the stream with mom and they got really long toes and long legs, and these fluffy bodies. They dip just like their mom... From the minute they're born they're dipping like that. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*

> *We saw a deer, which is really rad actually. It was totally galloping. You know, jumping up the hill. [ALW, Day, Mod, M]*

> *I' have to tell you this one thing we saw last night. We had this elk in our campground and she just basically wouldn't leave our campground alone. She would gallop back and forth throughout the night between the tents. It was really neat to see, she was just there. I don't know if she was mad, but she especially liked to paw the ground and snort beside one of our leaders' tents. You could hear snorting throughout the night. It was kind of funny. [ECW, Ov, Mod, F]*

> *Seeing the osprey and seeing the wildlife is probably the crowning point. I was just amazed and glad. [MJW, Ov, Low, F]*

The above examples illustrate the mix of factors that combine to make wilderness experiences so positive for visitors. Most of these types of circumstances tend to occur throughout the trip. For instance, one is perpetually surrounded by the natural environment, feelings of escape endure

throughout a trip, and social interaction is ongoing for people who are with others. On the other hand, negative factors are generally confined to isolated instances. For example, on visitor who had a negative interaction with another group early in the trip mentioned that *I haven't thought about it [again] until now.* Another described how it was *kind of disconcerting to have... somebody yelling. But that's been such a tiny, tiny part of the time, it's really not a big deal.* This factor may help account for the overall positive tone of responses to questions about emotions, thoughts, and influences on experience quality.

Like negative influences, positive influences varied considerably across wildernesses. Scenic aspects were substantially less salient for Mt. Jefferson visitors, whereas activity and wildlife were substantially more important. Mt. Jefferson is the most densely forested site and offers the fewest vistas. It also has the most productive fishing. These two factors probably account for the differences observed for scenery and activity. Being in a natural environment was also moderately more important for Mt. Jefferson visitors. Escape, peace and quiet, and solitude were substantially less important for Eagle Cap visitors and social ties were moderately less important for this sample. On the other hand, variety of natural scenery was moderately more important for these visitors. The Eagle Cap offers the most scenic variety, and people on extended overnight trips may have found aspects other than escape to be most important on longer trips.

There were almost no notable differences between day and overnight visitors in what were reported as key influences; only references to the natural environment differed, and this was moderately more important for day users (29%) than overnight visitors (19%). Interestingly, most of the key positive influences were more likely to be mentioned by people visiting on low use days. For example, 43% of these visitors mentioned solitude, compared to 17% of people on moderate use days and 24% of people on high use days. People visiting on low use days were also moderately more likely to mention their own group, wildlife, sensory aspects (smells and sounds), and easy access as key positive influences.

Effect of Participating in the Study

We asked 115 people (66%) whether participating in the study "affected them in any way." Clearly this type of self-report, particularly when asked at the end of a lengthy interview, is subject the problem of people giving socially desirable responses. That is, people may have felt unwilling to express negative comments. Nevertheless, the types of comments we received seem to suggest that most people were unaffected by or even enjoyed the process (Table 34).

Table 34. Effect of Participating in the Study

	MJW (n=36)	ALW (n=42)	ECW (n=37)	All Sites (n=115)
	----------Percent----------			
Positive	58.3	45.2	43.2	48.7
Neutral	41.7	33.3	24.3	33.0
No effect	13.9	7.1	8.1	9.6
Negative	5.6	4.8	2.7	4.3

Positive reactions came from people who felt the experience was *interesting*, *a nice diversion*, *a nice change of pace*, or was *fun to do*. Some were *glad to have run into* us, were *pleased to have talked about* their experiences, or found it *fun to talk about this stuff*. Some people said the interview *actually improved* the experience or was *enriching*. Nearly 20% of people made this type of comment.

> *I think it has actually improved it. It made me think about a lot of the things that I wouldn't have thought about. It's helped me hear what I wanted to hear. It's been very beneficial. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*
>
> *I'd say little to no effect. It's been kind of fun to think through your questions and answer them. But, other than that, not much. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]*
>
> *It make me think about what I've been thinking about, but not realizing I was thinking about it. It was good. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]*
>
> *It's been pleasant. It gives me a chance to reflect upon aspects of being here that I probably would have taken for granted not having to verbalize my thoughts and feelings. [ALW, Ov, Mod, M]*
>
> *Let me start by saying that it was a nice change of pace... I enjoyed your techniques... We were tired and kind of plodding along and all of a sudden we have bright eyed people wanting to ask us questions and it gives us a chance to rest. It was a very excellent experience. [ECW, Ov, Hi, M]*

Several people (approximately 14% of those who discussed being in the study) were also positive, or at least not negative, about being in the study, because they felt the results would help protect the wilderness resource. Nearly the same number accepted the intrusion because they recognized that the interviewers had a job to do or they appreciated assisting with a student's work.

> *It's been fine...I think it's positive to know that people are thinking about how to make the experience of using this area and other areas better. So, that's definitely a positive and it's worth taking 15 minutes to help that happen. [MJW, Ov, Mod, ?]*
>
> *I'm not sure what exactly your, the purpose of it is, that you're doing it, but if it benefits the area, benefits how Oregon or the Northwest manages its resources, it's not a problem to take the time to do those important things. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]*
>
> *It's a positive, because I feel, I'm hoping that whatever we can contribute to it is going to help protect the area if that's what its intent is. And I think that if we can contribute to that, in any way, we wish we could do more to contribute. [ALW, Ov, Hi, F]*

Neutral comments included statements like *it's ok*, *it's fine*, or *I don't mind talking to people*. As one Alpine Lakes visitor said, *I don't think it's a bad thing at all – I mean, the whole experience, it hasn't affected it one way or another.*

Nearly 10% of people who answered this question noted how unusual the experience was:

A little surreal. That's the last thing I expected was somebody to come by and ask me to be in a survey. There's not anything bad about it. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

Not negative or positive, but it's a different experience. I've never been interviewed out here. [MJW, Day, Hi, M]

Not something you normally encounter when you're in the wilderness. So, to that degree, yeah. I don't know if I'd say it's been positive or negative. Different. [ALW, Ov, Low, M]

I don't know. It's surprising to have somebody clear out here doing a survey. It hasn't affected things adversely at all. [ECW, Ov, Mod, M]

Very few people offered negative comments about the interview. All the comments we categorized as negative impacts on visitors' experiences are provided below:

I'm actually in advertising and marketing so I understand that research needs to be done. I can understand your perspective and where you're coming from. In order to get a good sample you have to talk to people who are in that situation. You couldn't go to the mall and ask people this because they aren't in that setting. I understand why you're doing but at first it's like, I don't want to do this. [MJW, Ov, Hi, F]

Kind of added on to a feeling of a lot of official people out here on the trail. You know, we ran into a Forest Service person and a State Trooper and you both back at the parking lot when we got off and then today again. [MJW, Of, Hi, M]

We're a little bit late. Late, as in, late in the evening. Otherwise I don't care. At all. No, it's no big deal. I like to visit. [ALW, Day, Low, F]

Well, it's something you got to do... I don't know what the deal is. Some of it didn't make sense to me. It's already a wilderness. I don't really have an idea what you're trying to accomplish. [ALW, Day, Hi, M]

DISCUSSION

Experiential Qualities Sought and Attained

Wilderness visitors to the three destinations we studied planned their trips for a variety of reasons, but many could be characterized as looking to engage in specific activities in a natural, undisturbed setting, while simultaneously having an opportunity to share the experience with family or friends. Social bonding, escape and mental refreshment were most frequently their goals, and it was rare for people to visit with the expressed interest of finding solitude, spiritual uplift, or personal challenge. We should note, however, that the three locations we studied may

not have attracted this type of person, because the trails are well popularized and generally easy to travel. Other locations might attract people with different sets of motives.

The conscious experience of wilderness tended to fulfill people's expectations and goals. Their attention and thoughts were nearly always actively or passively focused on the natural environment, and positive moods and emotions were nearly universal. Other thoughts ranged widely, from one's activity, to wildlife, to one's social group, to personal issues or memories. Thus, while the physical environment is engaging and captivating, visitors clearly shift back and forth between external, internal, and social foci of thought and attention.

On-going Importance of One's Own Group and Intermittent Salience of Other Groups

As Lee (1977) pointed out years ago, privacy is relative, and people seek privacy for their own group in wilderness, rather than the opportunity to be entirely alone. People's own group was important as a motive for their trip, it was a common a focus of attention and thought, and it was often a key influence contributing to overall experience quality. Wilderness visitors valued their friends and family for fun and relaxing conversation, but people also mentioned the special qualities of interactions and sharing that can occur on wilderness trips.

The relative unimportance of other groups as a focus of thought and attention was notable, and may be due to the brief and intermittent nature of encounters among groups, which people actively managed to limit or avoid. Even though crowding and disruptive behavior was the most commonly mentioned negative influence, only about one quarter of visitors cited this problem, and for just as many people, solitude and the relative lack of people were cited as a key positive influence.

Despite the overall unimportance of other visitors as a focus of immediate attention or thought, most people did notice and react to other visitors at some point during their trip. While people's own group was salient much of the time, most people, especially overnight visitors, had times when they were away from and unaware of other visitors. Nevertheless, the finding that 42% of people made remarks about others before we questioned them directly attests to the salience of other groups at times during the overall trip experience. The locations we studied were all heavily used, and there were days when we encountered more than 100 other people. Thus, it is not surprising that visitors frequently commented on their interactions with or reactions to other groups.

Most people's reactions to others were clearly mixed: while 56% made negative remarks, 63% of people made positive remarks, and two-thirds also made remarks that were ambivalent. Many wilderness visitors simply don't mind seeing a few other people, and many actively enjoyed the opportunity to chat and exchange pleasantries with other people that they viewed as similar to themselves. Passing friendly people on the trail contributed positively to the experience for people who are accustomed to impersonal or even hostile encounters with strangers in their daily lives.

When people reacted negatively to social conditions, simple crowding was slightly more of a problem than other visitors' behavior, although these two factors accounted for most of the

negative comments about others. Crowding affected campers more than day users, especially when campers were not able to put enough distance between themselves and other camps. Behaviors that were perceived as intentionally rude or inconsiderate bothered people, and these elicited the most intense emotional responses of any negative conditions.

Some researchers have speculated that high use can adversely affect visitors' experiences by raising levels of anxiety or feelings of loss of control over one's own circumstances (**CITE**). Although such comments were rare – perhaps because they require a relatively high level of introspection and verbal ability – we did find people who were concerned about whether they would be able to find a campsite or who did not allow themselves to fully relax because they anticipated meeting other groups throughout the day. Even though these people clearly had enjoyable experiences, their psychological defenses and reactions to use seem incompatible with the mandate of wilderness.

Solitude

Given the attention paid to other visitors and people's complex reactions to social conditions, it is perhaps not surprising that only about one third of the people we interviewed stated that they had unequivocally experienced a sense of solitude on their trip. This number is lower than the 57% reported among Shenandoah wilderness hikers by Hall (2001). At the same time, in the present study, only about 20% said they were completely unable to experience solitude, and a few of these people said this was the case because they were traveling with companions, which precluded solitude as they defined it. In the Shenandoah study, approximately 25% of people said they had not been able to experience solitude. It was surprising that day users were substantially more likely to say they unequivocally experienced solitude than overnight visitors, but this seems to have occurred because overnight users had more times in the trip when the solitude was interrupted, either by other visitors or by spending time with their own group.

Do these high use destinations provide outstanding opportunities for solitude? The answer seems to depend on how one defines "outstanding" and "opportunity." Most visitors told us they experienced solitude, even those visiting on high use days. To that extent, the opportunities seemed to have been available and realized. However, most did not experience solitude throughout their trip and most did not experience long, profound episodes of solitude. Thus, the question of whether the opportunities are "outstanding" seems open.

The managerial decision about whether to take action to protect opportunities for solitude in these high use locations is further complicated by the potential adverse impacts of management on other aspects of experience quality. Other parts of our research (e.g., Cole & Hall 2005) have shown that wilderness visitors do not judge the impairment of solitude caused by high use to be so bad as to justify actions like use limits that would restrict their freedoms. We found clear evidence that people reasoned about suboptimal social conditions in ways that downplayed or dismissed the negative impacts. We did interview a few people, almost all in the Lakes Basin, who felt that use levels were so high and impacts so great that use should be limited. However, although we did not ask directly about management policies, we suspect that most people we interviewed would, like people in other studies, generally prefer to cope with crowded conditions themselves than have use restricted.

Effect of Suboptimal Conditions on Experience Quality

Wilderness managers have identified many types of impacts, both social and ecological, that occur in high use wilderness destinations. One of our goals was to assess whether people attended to such "suboptimal" conditions and how they responded to them.

In general, it seems that most people were not highly aware of or bothered by suboptimal conditions, with the exception of crowding and inconsiderate behavior, as discussed above. Very few people mentioned ecological impacts (such as trampling, tree damage, or campfires). We did not ask directly about such perceptions, so it is possible that people simply failed to mention them. However, it appears that – for most people – any adverse effect was not great enough to bring up as a topic of conversation in an interview about experience quality. We should point out, however, that for many of the people who did notice and discuss impacts, these conditions were evaluated quite negatively. A few people were extremely bothered by litter, illegal fires, and damage to trees. Generally, impacts that were attributed to a lack of care or to irresponsible types of people had the greatest negative effect.

With the exception of use levels, most of the factors that were judged to be negative influences on experience quality are outside of the control of wilderness managers. Bad weather, mosquitoes, and fatigue are things that visitors may not like, but that they accept as part of traveling in the wilderness environment.

Our interviews revealed very few cases where management actions or regulations were deemed to affect the experience one way or the other. At Marion Lake and Pete Lake, few regulations were in place in 2002 – aside from having to complete a self-issued wilderness permit at the trailhead and pay a parking fee (two policies that had been in place for years), people were largely free to go where they wanted, camp where they wanted, and have campfires. Thus, people may have perceived few adverse effects of management on their trip. They may also have failed to appreciate or mention any positive effects of management (such as litter clean up or the provision of toilets at the two lakes). The Lakes Basin, on the other hand, had several regulations in place that restricted campers' behavior; specifically, people are required to camp away from lakeshores and cannot have campfires near many of the lakes. These issues arose in a few interviews – in particular there were a few people who were seriously annoyed at the inability to have campfires. Some of these people didn't understand why campfires would be restricted when more impactful activities like stock use were permitted. For the most part, however, the issue of regulation did not arise among Eagle Cap visitors much more often that among visitors to the other sites.

One conclusion revealed by our qualitative investigation was that the duration of different conditions seems to impact people's overall statements about experience quality. Many of the negative influences occur as brief episodes, and visitors tended to recognize this. Sometimes people would tell us that they had had a negative encounter, that bad weather had been a problem, or that they had felt frightened when trying to cross a flooded creek, but that the situation passed and they had forgotten about it. People might have felt crowded in one place or on one day of their trip, but not in other places or at other times. They felt tired when hiking with a heavy pack, but the feeling passed once they reached their destination and could relax. An exception to this general rule was the mosquitoes at Pete Lake – there were times when we were

there that the bugs were intense and unrelenting. This fact shows up in the finding that 43% of Alpine Lakes visitors cited mosquitoes as a negative factor.

Unlike negative influences, the factors that influenced people's trips positively tended to be present throughout the trip. For instance, the natural environment was always present, and changing views, the variety of settings, and pleasant smells and sounds maintained people's interest and enjoyment over time. While some people told us that they couldn't "get into" the sense of timelessness on a short trip or the first few days of a long trip, people routinely said that feelings of escape from daily life and leaving it all behind set in almost immediately. The lack of contact with the "outside world" meant that such feelings were generally uninterrupted except when people were seriously preoccupied with personal issues.

Differences by Site, Trip Length, and Use Level

Managers and researchers have speculated about whether people on day trips might have qualitatively different experiences than people on overnight trips (Cole 2001). High use destinations for the most part are day use destinations, and if day and overnight visitors differ dramatically, this would be an important factor to consider in making management decisions. While there have been some obvious differences detected, for instance that people on day trips travel shorter distances to the trailhead, for the most part few large or important differences have emerged when comparing perceptions of conditions or attitudes toward wilderness. In other components of our research (e.g., Cole & Hall 2005), we have found rather small differences in characteristics, although day users appear to be somewhat more tolerant of suboptimal conditions and somewhat more "limited" in their expectations about things like solitude.

There has also been interest in visitor differences between sites with differing levels of use. Many scholars have argued that people distribute themselves spatially to obtain desired outcomes (e.g., McCool & Cole 2001). If high and low use destinations provide radically different experiences of solitude and crowding, it logically people seeking experiences dependent on low-density should go disproportionately more to low-use places or visit at low use times. Indeed, our other research (Hall & Cole 2006)and the work of others (e.g., Johnson & Dawson 2004) has shown that people do tend to visit high use places on weekends or at low-use times of the year to avoid crowds. If there are substantial differences in the types of people who are attracted to places with different levels of use, this would be an important factor to consider when making management decisions (McCool & Cole 2001).

One component of our research, a study of visitors to 36 trails with differing use levels in Pacific Northwest wildernesses, compared people visiting very high use trails to those who went to high use and moderate use trails (Cole & Hall 2006). That study showed that people who went to the most heavily used places tended to have realistic expectations related to use levels and crowding, but this involved adjustments in their tolerance of others (in other words, they were somewhat more tolerant). High use did have an impact on wilderness experiences, but most visitors coped with these impacts with relatively little difficulty. Most had enjoyable experiences, despite encountering more people than they would prefer to meet, and most said they had been able to find solitude. However, such differences between people visiting sites with different use levels were not very large.

In this study, we contrasted day and overnight visitors. We also compared people who visited on high, moderate, and low use days. It is important to note that our study was focused on three sites that are all very heavily used, so we cannot speak definitively about people who avoid such sites altogether. However, use levels varied considerably on different days, and many visitors seemed aware of these differences. For comparative purposes, we also contrasted the three study locations, because they varied considerably in the physical difficulty of access, the types of activities they support, and the features of the natural environment. We felt it would be useful to determine whether variations in natural settings and visitor populations corresponded to different experiences, and whether these differences were more or less than the differences associated with trip length and use density.

Throughout this report, we considered differences of 20 percentage points or more to be substantial, and differences between 10 and 20 percentage points to be moderate. Any differences of less than 10 percent were not deemed meaningful, given the variety of questioning and open-ended nature of the qualitative study. Tables 35 to 37 summarize the types of differences observed between sites (Table 35), day and overnight visitors (Table 36), and days with different levels of use (Table 37).

This analysis shows that there were many differences among the three research sites, many of which were substantial. Visitors to the different sites had different constellations of motives, focused their attention in different aspects of the environment, differed in their somatic feelings and sense of timelessness, responded differently to the social environment, valued different aspects of interactions within their own groups, and had very different profiles of the factors that they deemed to be the key positive and negative influences.

Mt. Jefferson visitors were most likely to visit for an activity (fishing) and escape and less likely to visit for the natural environment or social reasons. Consistent with this, their attention tended to be focused on their activity and, to a certain extent wildlife, and less on emotion, mood, or spiritual thoughts. Their own group was highly positive, especially because of children. They tended to be intermediate between the other two sites in terms of the prevalence of negative reactions to other people.

Alpine Lakes visitors sought mental refreshment in an easily accessible site to a greater extent than visitors to the other locations. Their thoughts and attention were focused to a greater degree on the natural environment, particularly trees and water, and on personal issues and emotions like mental refreshment and gaining perspective on life. They were more positive than visitors to the other sites about the social environment and were least likely to report feeling crowded. Bugs, fatigue, and difficult creek crossings were much more prominent in their discussions of key influences.

Eagle Cap visitors were most likely to be drawn specifically to the natural environment and sought opportunities to be with friends more than visitors to the other locations. Given the nature of their trips, it is not surprising that they were less likely to visit due to easy access and for purposes of escape. Their thoughts and attention were focused more on the natural environment, particularly mountains and terrain, and less on themselves and personal issues. More than visitors to the other locations, they were adversely affected by social conditions and they were

least likely to have experienced solitude. Negative influences that appeared much more in the comments of Eagle Cap visitors were horses, litter, and airplanes, but they were more likely to cite landscape variety as a key positive influence.

In contrast to the considerable variability across sites, day and overnight visitors did not differ much in their trip motives, in their comments about their own group, or the factors that contributed positively or negatively to their trip. Some differences that did emerge, such as the focus on "chores" like setting up camp or filtering water and the unimportance of time, seem to reflect natural differences between day and overnight trips. Overnight users were more likely to have been negatively impacted by other visitors and to say they only experienced solitude in temporary episodes.

Differences among people visiting on days with different levels of use, while usually not substantial, were frequently of moderate magnitude. Although the focus of thought and attention and moods generally did not differ, some motives differed, with people on low use days more likely to cite easy access and people visiting on high use days more likely to seek escape. Many types of thoughts and foci of attention did not vary greatly, but people visiting on low use days were more likely to be focused on natural features like mountains, water, vegetation, and weather, and they were more likely to pay attention to their senses. Of particular note, the effect of use density was often substantial, with people on low use days more likely to be positive about the lack of people and consequent feelings of solitude, as well as the support and sharing that went on in their own groups. Conversely, people visiting on high use days were more likely to be negative or ambivalent about social conditions, to feel crowded, and to have been unable to experience solitude. They were also more likely to say that they enjoyed fun and camaraderie within their own group but that more intense sharing of experiences was less common.

Table 35. Differences in Dimensions of Wilderness Experiences among Research Sites

	Degree of Difference among Sites		
	Substantial	Moderate	None
Motives	Activity Environment – mountains Escape	Environment – scenery Family/friends Mental refreshment Ease of access	Environment – water Environment – forest
Focus of thought & attention	Environment – trees; water; mountains; snow Spiritual	Environment – geology Activity Emotion Wildlife Self/personal issues Somatic feelings	Environment – weather Facilities/trail Senses Other visitors
Mood & emotion - positive		Mental refreshment Humility Perspective	Awe, inspiration General 'good' Freedom Achievement Excitement
Mood & emotion - negative			Any negative emotion Anxiety Risk Irritation
Timelessness	Timelessness	Time does not matter	
Somatic feelings	General "good" Tired, challenged	Easy hike	In good shape
Social environment – other visitors – negative	Crowding		Behavior
Social environment – other visitors – positive		Behavior	Not crowded Friendly people
Solitude	Temporary episodes Partial solitude	Full solitude No solitude	
Own group	Special quality Being with similar people	Camaraderie Sharing experience Group support Children	Old friends
Key influences – negative	Crowding, behavior Mosquitoes Snow on trail	Weather Fatigue Creek crossings Horses Litter Ecological impacts Airplanes	
Key influences – positive	Scenery - natural features Escape - peace & quiet Weather Activity	Solitude - few people Social ties - own group Wildlife	Easy access

Table 36. Differences in Dimensions of Wilderness Experiences between Day and Overnight Visitors

	Degree of Difference between Day and Overnight Visitors		
	Substantial	Moderate	None
Motives		Environment - water	Activity, Environment - mts, geology, forest Escape Mental refreshment Ease of access
Focus of thought & attention	Environment - forests	Environment – water, weather, snow Activity – chores Trail Senses	Emotion Spiritual Wildlife Family/friends Self/personal issues Somatic feelings Other visitors
Mood & emotion - positive		General 'good'	Awe, inspiration Freedom Achievement Excitement Mental refreshment Humility Perspective
Mood & emotion - negative			Any negative emotion Anxiety Risk Irritation
Timelessness		Timelessness Time does not matter	
Somatic feelings	Tired, challenged	Easy hike	General 'good' In good shape
Social environment – other visitors – negative	Behavior	Crowding	
Social environment – other visitors – positive			Not crowded Behavior Friendly people
Solitude	Temporary episodes	Full solitude	Partial solitude No solitude
Own group		Camaraderie	Sharing experience Special quality Being with similar people Group support Children Old friends
Key influences – negative		Crowding or behavior Mosquitoes	Snow on trail Weather Fatigue Creek crossings Horses Litter Ecological impacts Airplanes
Key influences – positive			Scenery - natural features Escape - peace & quiet Solitude - few people Activity Social ties - own group Weather Wildlife Easy access

Table 37. Differences in Dimensions of Wilderness Experiences between High, Moderate, and Low Use Days

	Degree of Difference between People Visiting on High, Moderate, and Low Use Days		
	Substantial	Moderate	None
Motives		Environment - water Family/friends Escape Ease of access	Activity Environment – mts, scenery, forest Mental refreshment
Focus of thought & attention	Environment – mts, water Trail	Environment – weather, forest Wildlife Senses	Environment – geology, snow Activity Emotion Spiritual Family/friends Self/personal issues Somatic feelings Other visitors
Mood & emotion - positive		Freedom Mental refreshment	Awe, inspiration General 'good' Achievement Excitement Humility Perspective
Mood & emotion - negative		Any negative emotion	Anxiety Risk Irritation
Timelessness		Timelessness Time does not matter	
Somatic feelings	General 'good'	Tired or challenged Easy hike In shape	
Social environment – other visitors – negative	Crowding	Behavior	
Social environment – other visitors – positive		Not crowded Behavior	Friendly people
Solitude		Partial solitude No solitude	Full solitude Temporary episodes
Own group		Camaraderie Sharing experience Group support	Special quality Being with similar people Children Old friends
Key influences – negative		Crowding or behavior Weather Mosquitoes Creek crossings Snow on trail	Fatigue Horses Litter Ecological impacts Airplanes
Key influences – positive	Solitude, few people	Escape - peace & quiet Weather Activity Social ties - own group Wildlife Easy access	Scenery - natural features

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